

INTERVIEWING

Congratulations! Your resume, cover letter, application, and networking have paid off and you have a job interview! As you prepare for this phase of the hiring process, remember that just as the employer is interviewing you, you are also interviewing them. The questions you ask are just as important as the questions you answer!

Your goals for the interview are to:

- Provide evidence of your ability to contribute and create value for the employer.
- Communicate how you align with the job and the employer.
- Share your enthusiasm and professional personality as you connect with the interviewers.
- Generate a JOB OFFER!

The employer's goals for the interview are to:

- Explore your experiences to determine if you are qualified to do the job and able to advance the business/organization.
- Determine if you are a good fit for the job, team, and organization.
- Evaluate your communication, organization, problem solving, and critical thinking skills.
- Provide you with information about the job and the organization.

Preparing for Your Interview

Research the Employer & Your Interviewer(s): To connect your experience, skills, and goals with the employer, you should learn about the company and your interviewers. Use this matrix to guide your employer research:

Company & Industry	What does Company do?	How do they do it?	Products/Outcomes	Competitors
FoxHealth Healthcare	Provides full-spectrum health care services	2 area hospitals (Foxtown & Foxville), 13 outpatient clinics, Foxtown level III trauma center, UniHealth partnership	#2 area health system, high customer satisfaction, strong general care, cancer center, behavioral health clinic	Valley Health System, Saint John's Hospital, Lakeside Health
Valley Orthopedic Healthcare clinic	Orthopedic care for all ages with sports medicine focus	3 outpatient clinics, outpatient surgery, radiology, and PT	#1 area orthopedic practice, sports medicine excellence	FoxHealth Orthopedics, SportsMed Associates

You can also research the **people** you are interviewing with. When you schedule your interview, ask for the interviewer's name and job title. Do a LinkedIn or Google search to learn more about who you will be meeting with. Look for ways your experience aligns with theirs or if you have connections in common. Before meeting with someone, you should know:

- Name and Job Title
- Education
- Career path and key accomplishments
- How you are connected: identify common experiences, employers, education, and shared connections

Match Yourself to the Job: To connect your experience to what the employer needs, you have to understand the job you are interviewing for. Follow these steps to understand the job description and identify how your experience meets the employer's needs:

1. **Research the job:** Review the Job Description to identify
 - a. Skills, Competencies or Experience desired
 - b. Deliverables: What does the job you are interviewing for deliver? How does it impact the company's business?

2. **Match Yourself to the Job:** Use the following tool to identify your relevant skills, competencies, and experiences, so that you are ready to talk about how your qualifications will contribute to the employer’s business.

Position: Accounting Assistant	Employer: XYZ Product Innovations, Inc.
Skill/Competency/Experience	Examples from your experience:
Education and experience	<i>Associate Degree in Accounting and Bookkeeping Technical Diploma. Accounting internship with Smythe CPA (6 months); Payroll internship with FoxCo (4 months)</i>
QuickBooks & MS Excel	<i>Used QuickBooks in Smythe internship for small business accounting. Certified MS Excel advanced. Experience with pivot tables, formulas, and v-lookups. Example: payroll data reporting project for FoxCo. Used data exported to MS Excel to identify trends.</i>
Cost Accounting	<i>Course in cost accounting and participated in inventory management with FoxCo.</i>
Payroll Processing	<i>Trained in ADP Workforce. Processed weekly hourly payroll and biweekly salaried payroll.</i>
Communication	<i>Participated in Collegiate DECA – public speaking, presentations. Written communication course.</i>
Team player mindset	<i>DECA college recruitment team. Worked with team of 5 students to recruit new members. Successfully recruited 13 new members from entering class through mass communication, class visits, business department social, and personal outreach!</i>

Types of Questions

The best interview is a good conversation. That said, an interview is a structured and strategic conversation built around the skills, attributes, and competencies relevant to success in the job you are interviewing for. Employers ask different kinds of interview questions to decide if you are the right person for the job. This section defines each kind of question and provides several examples.

Traditional Questions focus on getting to know you, your interest in the position, knowledge of the business and industry, work experience, and education. You should **always** be prepared to answer the following questions:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What interested you in this position?
3. What do you know about our company/business?
4. Why did you choose to study _____?
5. Why are you leaving your current position/employer?
6. What are your compensation goals?

Strategies for Answering Traditional Interview Questions:

- **Tell me about yourself.** Prepare your 30-60 second professional introduction or “elevator pitch.” Restate your name, provide your education, your most recent or relevant work experience, briefly explain what interested you in the job, and thank the interviewer for the opportunity. [See our guidance on developing your professional introduction.](#)
- **Why did you leave a past job?** Stay positive! Be honest. Own responsibility for your past performance and DO NOT speak negatively about prior managers, co-workers, or employers.
- **What are your compensation goals?** Research compensation data prior to the interview. Know what salary range or hourly rate you are looking for. Consider benefits and cost of commuting. [See guidance on Salary & Compensation](#)

Review more practice [Traditional Interview Questions](#) in our online resource.

Behavioral Questions: Employers use behavioral questions to make **evidence-based** hiring decisions. These questions ask you to share a **specific experience** (problem/project/task/accomplishment) from your work or education that responds to the question. Behavioral questions are challenging because they ask you to think critically about yourself and your experience.

Strategies for Answering Behavioral Interview Questions: The STAR Method

You can identify behavioral questions because they usually begin with a phrase like “tell me about a time when you . . .” or “have you ever dealt with . . .” These phrases signal that the employer wants to know about a **specific** experience you had at work or school. Think of your answer as **telling a story** about a relevant experience.

You can use the 3-step **STAR method** to help you answer effectively:

1. Describe the **SITUATION** you faced or **TASK** you needed to accomplish. Share a **specific situation** rather than a general circumstance. Provide enough detail for the interviewer to understand the problem you faced.
2. Describe the **ACTIONS** you took in response to the situation. Focus on what you did, how you did the work, and why you chose to take the actions you did.
3. Describe the **RESULT** or your actions. Explain what happened, what you/the team accomplished, and/or what you learned.

EXAMPLE using the 3-part STAR Method:

- **Question:** Tell me about a time when you had to work with a difficult customer?
- **Situation or Task:** As a barista it is important to make sure the customer is happy with their beverage. Last week, I prepared a sugar-free vanilla latte. I used 2% milk because there were no special items checked. Unfortunately, the customer had ordered soy milk, and was very angry that I had not confirmed the milk choice with them.
- **Action:** I apologized immediately, asked if there was an allergy or sensitivity – fortunately not – and then quickly remade the latte using soy.
- **Result or Outcome:** While the customer was not happy about the delay, they thanked me for apologizing and asking about allergies. After that, my co-worker and I made sure to ask about milk preference. With two of us checking for that, we were able to prevent similar situations.

Prepare in Advance:

- Study the list of behavioral question examples and use your job description analysis to select questions related to the job components, skills, or deliverables.
- **Identify 8-10 specific experiences or “success stories” that respond to those questions.**
- Outline your success stories using the STAR method: situation/task, action, and result.
- Practice telling your stories.
- Keep your answers brief (1-4 minutes depending upon the complexity of the question asked).
- Think about follow-up questions interviewers might ask to learn more about your actions.

Sample Behavioral Questions:

1. Tell us about a time when you had to communicate difficult information in writing.
2. We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give us an example of how you’ve done this.
3. Tell us about a time when you worked with a team on a project. What was the team’s goal and what was your role on the team?
4. Tell me about a time when your time management skills were tested by a changing situation at work.

Review more practice [Behavioral Interview Questions](#) in our online resource.

Situational Questions ask what you **might or would** do in a relevant hypothetical situation. The interviewer describes a scenario or task and asks how you would handle that situation or accomplish that task.

Strategies for Answering Situational Interview Questions:

- Take a moment to analyze the scenario, then think about and structure your answer.
- If you need to clarify the scenario, ask a specific follow-up question.
- Explain what **actions** you will take to achieve the desired result or outcome.
- Explain **how** you will do the work, **who** you will involve, and **why**.
 - Emphasize relevant skills, technology, and resources.
- If possible, **provide an experience-based example** of how you've responded to a similar situation in the past. See Strategies for Answering Behavioral Questions.

Review practice [Situational Interview Questions](#) in our online resource.

“Curveball” Questions: Employers are hiring you to think and respond to unexpected situations at work. They also want to get to know you and your personality in the interview. To assess how you will respond to an unexpected or unique situation, employers are frequently adding “curveball” questions. These questions are designed to catch you by surprise and make you think creatively. Some examples include:

1. If you could have a superpower, what would it be?
2. What can you do or bring to the company that no one else can?
3. If you could be any kind of animal, what would it be and why?
4. Is it better to turn in a great project late or an average project on time?
5. If you could design your ideal manager, what would their leadership style be?

Questions for YOU to Ask: During the interview, you will be asked “what questions do you have for us?” This is one of the most important parts of your interview because it gives you the opportunity to direct the conversation and demonstrate your value and curiosity. It is important that you are prepared to ask thoughtful questions for two reasons: first, you need information to help you decide if you are interested in the job; and second, asking relevant questions demonstrates your critical thinking skills. **Prepare 3-5 questions in advance!** Listed below are some sample questions for you ask. Not all of them are appropriate for every interview situation.

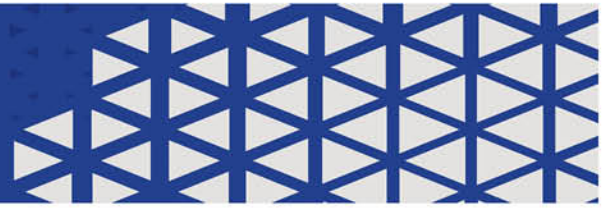
Review sample [Questions for You to Ask](#) in our online resource.

Types of Interviews

Employers use various types of interview settings to evaluate your qualifications, your interest in the position, and your “fit” for the job, team, and company in comparison to other candidates. Your performance in any interview will depend upon how well you prepare (see Preparation Guidance above), but understanding the setting and purpose for each kind of interview will help you successfully navigate the hiring process:

Phone Interview: Generally, the first phase of the hiring process following the application, a phone interview is typically conducted by a human resources representative, recruiter, or talent acquisition specialist.

- 15-30 minutes
- Focuses on your work experience, education, training, and availability.
- Assesses your “job fit”: does the job content, structure, environment, and compensation match your needs?
- Reviews your work experience including your reasons for leaving current or past jobs.



Virtual Interview:

- Conducted using virtual meeting technology like Google Meet, MS Teams, or Zoom.
- Can be used for screening interviews or as an alternative to an onsite interview.
- Test your technology in advance to ensure a smooth and professional experience.
- Dress just as you would for an onsite interview. Darker colors work best for virtual meetings. Choose attire one level above what you would wear to work within your industry.
- Make sure you are well-lit and use a neutral background with no distractions (pets, children, noise, etc.).
- Make “eye contact” with the interviewer by looking into the webcam rather than at your image or the interviewer’s.

Onsite Interview: You’ve successfully advanced through the hiring process and have an onsite (or virtual) interview with the hiring manager and/or team, here’s what you need to know:

- 45 minutes or longer.
- Conducted by the hiring manager; could include multiple interviews with other team members or a panel interview.
- You may be asked to give a presentation, demonstrate a skill, or participate in a role-play or problem-solving exercise.
- Arrive 10 minutes early – you should be checked in at the assigned office location at this time.
- Bring a padfolio with copies of your resume, a notepad and pen.
- Prepare in advance 3-5 questions you want to ask about the job/employer. *This is essential*, see guidance above.
- Appearance: your grooming *and* dress should be professional and tidy. Attire should be clean, pressed, well-fitting, and one level above what you would wear to work. Grooming should be polished and professional and makeup conservative and natural. See additional guidance in the “What to Wear?” section.

What to Wear:

How you present yourself as a professional can make or break your interview whether it is onsite or virtual. Follow these guidelines to be sure you are making your best first impression!

Attire for interviews can range from a professional business suit to business casual separates to neat casual wear depending on your field or industry. Select clothes that are well-fitting, clean, pressed, and appropriate for your industry and the employer you are interviewing with. In general, choose one level above what you would wear to work.

- **Business | IT | Legal | Government | Communications:** choose business professional attire such as a suit, business separates or a conservative dress. Darker colors are better and make sure your dress shoes are comfortable and easy to walk in.
- **Healthcare | Nursing | Technologist | MA | HIT | Veterinary Technician:** choose business professional attire and be sure to wear professional shoes you’ll be comfortable wearing on a facility tour.
- **Manufacturing | Engineering | Skilled Crafts | Construction | Agriculture | Horticulture | Transportation:** Business casual, dress slacks/khakis with a golf or button-down shirt for men, conservative top, blouse, or sweater for women. Ask the recruiter who schedules your interview if you should wear/bring safety shoes and/or other personal protective equipment.
- **Interior Design | Cosmetology | Aesthetics | Massage Therapy:** Business casual or business professional depending upon the employer’s standards as reflected in their online presence. Employers in these creative fields expect to see candidates express their professional personality, style, and design philosophy.

Saying Thank You and Following Up after an Interview

Saying thank you promptly and courteously after an interview is not just the right thing to do, it is essential to any successful job search! A prompt and strategic thank-you note can positively influence the employer's decision-making process and/or your continued consideration for other opportunities with the same employer. It's also an opportunity to expand your network and gain additional leads.

You should offer your written thanks whenever an employer gives you their time, such as following a:

- Job interview (of any kind, at any stage of the hiring process)
- Informational interview or networking conversation
- Job offer
- Rejection notification
- When someone acts as a reference

When interviewing, always say thank you in person to everyone you speak with during an interview (phone, virtual, or onsite), then follow up with a written thank-you message sent via email within 24 (preferably) to 48 hours. Send a unique and personalized thank-you email to each interviewer. It might even be wise to send one to the administrative assistant who greeted you, made you feel welcome, got you some water, escorted you to the interviewing area, and introduced you to the rest of the team.

Your thank-you note should be error-free and written using business English standards. After you express your thanks for the interview and confirm your continued interest in the position or company, you can also do one or more of the following:

- Pass on a compliment about the company or individual.
- Summarize the key points from the interview.
- Restate how you can contribute and reaffirm your value.
- State how your goals match the company's or department's goals.
- Solve an observed problem.
- Clear up a misconception.
- Mention something significant you forgot to say at the interview.

Obviously, your letter cannot include all these features. Be strategic; think about the interview, reflect on what you heard and observed and whom you met, then briefly explain in a professional and confident tone how you will meet the employer's specific needs.