Mastering the Art of the Interview

INTERVIEWING 101
Types of Interviews

For most roles, there is a sequence of different types of interviews. Each type requires somewhat different preparation. Here is a list of the possible interview types:

**Round One**
- Phone Screening (with an HR person or with the Hiring Manager)
- Video Screening (one-way or two-way)

**Round Two +**
- Face-to-Face Interview (with the hiring manager or team)
- Group Interview
- Presentation Interview
- Case Interview (common for consulting)
- Technical Interview (common for technology roles)
Types of Questions

When you go on a job interview, there are a variety of different types of interview questions you'll be asked. Preparing for the interview means preparing to answer each type of question - knowing the goal for each kind of question.

- **Qualifications Questions.** These get at your skills and experience(s) that qualify you for the role.
- **Behavioral Questions.** A behavioral question is a question that asks you to tell a story or give a specific example of something.
- **Scenario Questions.** A scenario question is when you are given a hypothetical situation and asked what you would do in that situation.
Qualifications Questions

- “Tell me about yourself.”
- “What interests you about this position?”
- “What is your greatest strength and greatest weakness?”
- “What do you think your biggest challenge might be in this role?”

**TIPS FOR ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS:**

- Make a claim about yourself and provide evidence.
- Be positive, specific and succinct.
- Try to limit your answer to two minutes at most.

**EXAMPLE:**

“I am interested in this role because I enjoy refining operational systems. In my last role, I audited best practices for cultivating new donors, and I proposed a new CRM tool for tracking stakeholder relationships.”
A behavioral question is a question that asks you to tell a story or give a specific example of something. In general, these questions focus on assessing your soft skills, like conflict resolution, leadership, teamwork or change management.

The parts of the story the interviewer is most interested in are the specifics of the situation you faced and the action you took. Keep it specific, brief, positive and authentic.

“Can you give an example of a time you led a project? Describe your approach to working with a team.”

“Tell us about a time you had to change your approach to a project, or how you dealt with an obstacle or failure.”

“Can you describe a situation in which you experienced conflict in the workplace and how you handled it?”

**EXAMPLE:**

“In a previous role, I navigated relationships with diverse stakeholders, including management, staff and customers. Each group had a very different perspective on our product, and I started every conversation by attempting to understand their unique needs/perspectives and creating a solution that was high impact but easy to deploy.”
Scenario Questions

- “What would you do if a subordinate or team member’s work was not up to expectations?”
- “How would you deal with a colleague at work with whom you seem to be unable to build a successful working relationship?”
- “You don’t have the information you need to prioritize your projects. Your co-workers and supervisor are unavailable for you to ask for guidance. How do you handle the situation?”

A scenario question is when you are given a hypothetical situation and asked what you would do in that situation.

Answer the questions thoughtfully, describing your desired outcome and approach to achieving it in challenging professional situations.

This is an opportunity to demonstrate the confidence and decisiveness of a leader. Don’t be afraid to ask questions or get clarification!
Qualification Questions

Qualifications questions assess or verify your skills, experience, competencies, and credentials. Remember competencies are the knowledge and behaviors needed for the specific role so during your interview preparation double-check the job description for what they are looking for and think of clear examples of when you’ve demonstrated these competencies.
Qualification Questions

Qualifications-focused questions give you the opportunity to summarize the specific skills and other attributes you bring to the role. Your answers should be clear and succinct, putting a spotlight on your brand and distinctiveness as a candidate, with examples.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.

This is often the first question you’ll get, designed to help the interviewer break the ice and get a general sense of who you are. Resist the temptation to tell your life story. Your answer should present your qualifications for the position you’re pursuing.

“I'm a junior at DePaul, studying Art History. I have experience in researching provenance, organizing digital collections and providing event support. I recently completed an internship at the Art Institute of Chicago, where I led tours for elementary school students and created interactive lesson plans for some of the most visited art objects at the museum.”
**WHAT ARE YOUR GREATEST STRENGTHS?**

This question offers an opportunity to talk about the technical and soft skills that relate most directly to the position.

“I’m a problem solver. In every job I’ve had, I’ve shown the ability to quickly analyze the issue, contributing factors and desired outcomes, get my teammates involved, and develop a solution. In my previous internship position, we were consistently getting negative reviews from customers on delivery times. I brainstormed with my co-workers to come up with ways to improve the order fulfillment process. Many of the changes we suggested were implemented and our reviews improved dramatically.”

**WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS?**

Employers want to know how you envision your career path and your personal career goals to see if they align with the role. Your answer should generally outline how your broader goals fit with the opportunity.

“In five years, I’d like to be using my graphic design skills to tell a product’s story. I am very interested in pursuing a career in food marketing, and this role is an ideal starting point for this pathway.”
**WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THIS POSITION?**

This question is an opportunity to demonstrate a clear understanding of the role, your enthusiasm for the company—and how perfect you are for the job! Frame your answer in terms of your strengths and how you’d benefit the company:

“I’m excited about this position because its requirements fit so well with my strengths. For example, it seems like the job requires excellent customer service skills. In my last internship position, this was an area where I excelled. The accounts I worked on consistently had the highest customer satisfaction scores. I think I can contribute to those kinds of results at this company.”

**WHAT ARE YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESSES?**

This common interview question offers the chance to demonstrate confidence, self-awareness and a desire to constantly improve—all traits attractive to employers. State a shortcoming and, most important, what you’ve done to address it. End on a positive note!

“Sometimes I’m too eager to say yes. During my internship last summer, my enthusiasm and desire to please sometimes led me to commit to every request I received from my boss and coworkers. This often resulted in me feeling overwhelmed and working nights and weekends. I still say ‘yes,’ but over time, I’ve learned to do a better job managing expectations—and I’ve become more efficient at handling multiple tasks.”
1. Tell me about your interest in this role.

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<td>The interviewee clearly articulated their interest in this role.</td>
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<td>The interviewee identified what makes them qualified for this role.</td>
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<td>The interviewee expressed genuine interest in working with this employer.</td>
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2. What part of this role do you see as where you might have a learning curve or where you might face a challenge?

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<td>The interviewee identified a skill or knowledge that they would need to build in this role.</td>
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<td>The interviewee articulated how they might build on an existing skill to learn—or expressed interest in growing this skill.</td>
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<td>The interviewee was authentic, positive, and enthusiastic in their answer.</td>
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Behavioral questions typically focus on your experience in a specific work situation to evaluate soft skills such as problem solving, conflict resolution and leadership. Be positive and to-the-point in your answers, tell it like a story, and be sure to give examples!
TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU HAD MULTIPLE RESPONSIBILITIES. HOW DID YOU MANAGE?

The ability to multi-task and handle workload pressure are valuable qualities in a job candidate. Keep your story short, positive and be sure to include an outcome!

“My co-worker had a family emergency right in the middle of a major project and it fell to me to cover his role in addition to my own. I took a few deep breaths, then put together a master task list that combined his to-do list with mine, along with timing. This allowed me to prioritize the different things that needed to be done and gave me a way to keep track of the details. I had to put in some late nights, but we completed the project successfully and on time.”

HOW DO YOU HANDLE CONFLICT IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

With this question, your interviewer is trying to assess your emotional maturity, interpersonal skills and leadership qualities. company:

“When I’ve had to deal with conflict with a co-worker, I’ve found that it’s most important to remain calm. I ask questions to understand the person’s perspective and get their thoughts on how to resolve the conflict. When I was a project manager in my last job, there was a team member who was consistently late in finishing tasks. When I asked her about it, she became defensive and upset. I calmly acknowledged that the schedule was brutal and asked what I could do to help. With her input, we developed a few minor changes in our work processes and her performance improved.”
“Tell me about a time you failed.”

Identify a real failure and share what you learned from that experience.

“In my first year as a marketing specialist, I led a team of juniors on a social media campaign, and I learned very quickly that setting aggressive deadlines really de-motivated the team and their work suffered. I learned to balance my expectations more realistically.”

See our "Common Interview Questions" handout!
This role involves a lot of project management and dealing with both moving parts and multiple teams. Can you give an example of a time you worked as part of a group and describe how you managed working as a team?

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<td>The interviewee succinctly related an example of a group project they were a part of.</td>
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**In this role, you have to problem solve and adapt to changing priorities. What is your approach to managing change and responding to different needs?**

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<td>The interviewee succinctly related an example of either problem solving or managing priorities as part of this answer.</td>
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<td>The interviewee described their approach to managing change.</td>
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**What questions do you have for me at this time?**

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<td>The interviewee asked a question that expressed knowledge of this role or this industry.</td>
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<td>The interviewee asked a question that allowed them to reiterate their interest in this role or their qualifications.</td>
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An interview is a two-way conversation, and you should approach it that way—it’s as much you evaluating the position and organization as it is them evaluating you.

Almost every job or internship interview includes the opportunity for you to ask questions of the interviewer(s). Asking meaningful questions serves several purposes: it makes your interview a better learning experience, it provides insights to help you evaluate fit, and it presents you as a thoughtful, well-prepared candidate. You should arrive at your interview with several questions prepared.
YOUR QUESTIONS CAN FALL INTO FOUR CATEGORIES:

1. Role-specific

   Centered on the position—duties, requirements, expectations.

   • What, in your view, are some of the biggest challenges in this role?
   • What does success look like in this role and how is it measured?
   • What do you see as the most important qualities that contribute to success in this role?

After listening closely to the interviewer’s answers to these questions, you can reply by articulating your interest in these skills, challenges, opportunities, etc. Or, you can map them back to your skills and expertise. For example, in response to a comment around cross-functional thinking:

“I really enjoy working cross-functionally, and in my previous role I created several reports using qualitative and quantitative data that assessed the success of our team initiatives.”
2 Industry trends

These questions are about how trends might be impacting the role you’re applying to—these show you’re ready to hit the ground running and can also be enjoyable for the interviewer to answer.

- I know that data security is an increasingly important issue across health care—is this a trend that’s impacted this role?
- Recently, I read an article about the importance of seamlessness in marketing across channels—is this something you’re seeing, too? Does this role get involved in multichannel marketing?

3 Company-specific

These questions get at an organization’s overall direction, and how this role might transform over time.

- I know that this office was recently restructured and has adopted a new service delivery model—where do you think this might land in five years?
- What do you think might be the next big change for this company or this role?

4 Tactical

These questions pertain to the selection process and timing.

- What are the next steps in the interview process?
- What is the overall time frame for filling this position? When do you hope to have it filled?
RESEARCHING YOUR QUESTIONS

Questions should arise naturally as you prepare for the interview. Jot them down as you learn about the company and the position:

A few “don’ts”

- Don’t ask yes/no questions.
- Don’t ask broad, hard-to-answer questions—you don’t want to stump your interviewer!
- Don’t ask questions about salary and benefits—there will be plenty of time for this topic later in the hiring process.

- Read the job description carefully. What questions come to mind? What’s missing in its description of the position?
- Review the organization’s website and how they describe their mission, business, products/services and approach. Is there a particular aspect that you find interesting or are unclear on?
- Review the website’s career section. Does it bring questions to mind?
- Keep on top of trends in the industry by curating a list of go-to journals or resources, like professional organizations or magazines.
PREPARE FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

Preparation is key to a successful interview. It’s more than having good answers to likely questions—when you’re prepared, you’re more relaxed and confident. When you’re prepared, you look prepared.

It pays to take the right steps before—and after—a job interview to maximize the chances of making a positive impression and getting the offer. Here’s a step-by-step guide to making sure you’re ready!
1. **STUDY THE JOB AND MATCH IT TO YOUR STRENGTHS**

The first step in your preparation is to carefully review the job description. Make a list of the knowledge, skills and other qualifications outlined in the description. Then, list your strengths and qualifications and match them to the description. Write out examples of these strengths in action. This will prepare you for job- and you-specific interview questions.

2. **RESEARCH THE COMPANY**

Be sure to walk into the interview fully prepared for the inevitable “So, tell me what you know about us” interview question. Review the website, starting with the “about us” section. Know the way they describe their mission, their business, their products and services, and their customers. Search the web for industry articles. Reach out to your network for any insights. Jot down a few notes. Think of questions to ask about the organization.

3. **PRACTICE FOR THE INTERVIEW**

Take the time to write out likely questions and your answers. Practice your delivery with a career center advisor or peer. This will help you feel relaxed and confident in the interview.

*Also check out DePaul’s “Interview Basics” handout*
4 PLAN YOUR CLOTHING

What you wear will play a significant part in the impression you make, especially initially. Regardless of the company or position, you’ll want to dress in clean, well-pressed, reasonably new attire. Err on the side of more formal—underdressing for the interview can reflect negatively on your interest in the position. If you need interview-friendly attire, check out the Career Center’s Career Closet—you can get up to four articles of clothing, including jackets, tops, and accessories for free!

5 BE PREPARED, LOOK PREPARED

What to bring to the interview? It’s a good idea to bring extra copies of your resume, a list of references, your notes on the company, questions you’ve prepared and blank paper for note-taking. Leave your phone—turned off—in your purse or pocket.

6 BE PROMPT

Be sure you’re familiar with the interview location and the best way to get there. If you drive, know the parking situation. Give yourself plenty of time—it’s much better to spend a few minutes in the lobby or parking lot with a last review of your notes than rushing in, breathless and apologizing.
MASTER THE VIDEO INTERVIEW

Video interviewing is a growing trend, with big organizations like Google, Apple, Facebook and Twitter leading the way. Just like in-person interviews, success on video boils down to one word: preparation.

Video interviewing—conducting a job interview from a remote location using video technology—is becoming more popular among hiring organizations and recruiters, mainly because it’s more efficient, it’s easier and faster for them to schedule, interview, and narrow down a candidate pool.

Interviewing by video can benefit candidates as well, including lowering the planning and travel costs for those who do not live in the employer’s area, and the ability to interview from a familiar, comfortable space.

Video interviews can be live or pre-recorded. For a live interview, you might be on a link or a call. For pre-recorded video interviews, also called one-way interviews, you will be sent login information, and you will record your responses to interview questions that have been pre-recorded or appear in writing on the screen. There is often a time limit for your answers, and you may be given more than one chance to record each answer.

How to prepare for your big on-camera moment

PREPARATION IS KEY!

How you prepare for your big video interview is the key to performing well in your video interview. It’s not all that different from an in-person interview—you’ll want to dress appropriately and be prepared to answer questions and topics—but there are some things you can do to make sure your moment on the screen goes well.

See our “Tips for Interview Prep” handout for help.

ASK GREAT QUESTIONS IN YOUR INTERVIEW

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   - What are the most important qualifications that contribute to success in this role?

2. After listening closely to the interviewer’s answers to these questions, you can reply by articulating your interest in these skills, challenges, opportunities, etc. Or, you can map them back to your skills and expertise. For example, if in response to a comment around cross-functional training:

   “I really enjoy working cross-functionally, and in my previous role I created several reports using qualitative and quantitative data that assessed the success of our team initiatives.”

3. General guidelines

   - What, in your view, are some of the biggest challenges in this role?
   - What does success look like in this role and how is it measured?
   - What do you see as the most important qualifications that contribute to success in this role?

4. How to research employer dress codes

   Dress codes in the workplace have relaxed considerably in recent years, which can make it tougher, not easier, to decide what to wear. While it’s definitely better to over-dress than under-dress, looking too formal for an interview can suggest that you’re not a good fit for the culture. That said, here are some general guidelines:

   • Clothes should be in good condition, fit correctly, and be clean and lint-free
   • Wear dress shoes that are comfortable and clean
   • Hair should be well-groomed
   • Fragrance—light touch is better
   • Bring essentials only—a professional bag, briefcase or portfolio
   • Cell phone off!

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. That’s why it’s important to put careful thought into how you dress for job interviews and meetings with business contacts.

It’s all part of your personal brand. It’s the package you present—your qualifications, your personality, and, yes, your style—when you meet someone who can help advance your career. You know you’re a person with great potential. Follow these simple guidelines to make sure you look the part!
NEGOTIATING SALARIES AND JOB OFFERS

Negotiation is a normal—even expected—part of the hiring process. Working to get the best offer possible can have an impact on your career, affecting satisfaction with the current job as well as your future trajectory. Don’t be shy. Negotiate!

Do your homework on salary
Know your worth in objective terms. How much does someone in this position, in this industry, in this location, at your experience level, typically make? There are a wealth of resources online to get this information free of charge, including:

- glassdoor.com
- linkedin.com/salary
- salary.com
- payscale.com

In addition to online tools, informational interviews are a great place to learn about the average salaries you can expect for specific positions at different types of employers.

There’s more to compensation than salary
Don’t make the mistake of looking at an offer solely based on salary. There are many other aspects of compensation that are important to your career and quality of life. Such as:

- Bonuses—signing bonus, annual bonus
- Vacation/paid time off
- Medical/dental/vision coverage
- College tuition reimbursement
- Hours/workplace flexibility
- Training, certifications and professional association dues
- Mentoring/coaching programs
- Childcare
- Health and fitness
- Workplace amenities

Address multiple issues at the same time
Take the time to identify all issues before beginning to negotiate, and address them at the same time. Raising one item, getting an answer and then bringing up two more will not be productive. Present all concerns at once, and prioritize them, letting the employer know order of importance.

Let them know you want the position
Remember, if you’ve been offered a position, it means the employer likes you. They will be much more inclined to be flexible if they’re confident that you would like to take the position. No one wants to go to bat for you, only to hear, “No thanks.”

Express your desired salary in a range, not a figure
You’ve done your research—you know what you’d like to make—providing a range is a more strategic way to begin negotiations.

If a job application asks you to provide a desired salary range, type in a word like “negotiable” if possible. If it comes up in an interview, an answer like this often works: “I would like to learn more about the role, but I had planned on asking for [a range] for this position.”

Always be professional and personable
Negotiations can be tough. No matter what, don’t lose your cool. Stick to your rationale. Show you understand the other person’s perspective. Avoid—and ignore—ultimatums. And whatever the outcome, be gracious and grateful.

Get everything in writing
The offer letter is critical, particularly after a negotiation. The employer may have a standard offer letter that does not include the details you successfully negotiated. Review the offer letter carefully. Insist that it include every detail, and make sure you’re comfortable with the wording.
WHAT CAN THE CAREER CENTER DO FOR YOU?

- Drop-In Career Coaching (no appointment necessary!)
- Virtual Appointments with Career Community Advisors
- Email Resume Review
- Access a Career Library of 50+ Handouts and Videos
- Search for opportunities on Handshake, our careers platform
- Network with Alumni on (ASK) or Alumni Sharing Knowledge

careercenter.depaul.edu
The DePaul Career Center recently created a library of 50+ handouts and 14 two-minute videos focused on every career readiness topic, ranging from resume basics to exploration to building your brand!

Check it out here: go.depaul.edu/careerlibrary
SKILLS LABS!

Join us for our weekly 30 minute skills-based sessions. Anyone who RSVPs on Handshake will get a recording of the session with supplemental materials!
JOIN A CAREER COMMUNITY!

Opt into a Career Community to receive exclusive email alerts, targeted job & internship postings, tailored industry resources, career advising, and more.

Regardless of your chosen major, you can explore multiple Career Communities and attend events across all industries – you’ll develop a great network for future opportunities and learn about a variety of career paths.

- Exploring Careers & Interests
- Business, Entrepreneurship & Consulting
- Education, Nonprofit & Government
- Health Care & Science
- Media, Communication, Arts & Entertainment
- Technology & Design
Thank You!