

Interview Preparation

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

www.venturacollege.edu/career



The purpose of an interview is twofold:

1. It shows the employer what you can do for the company
2. It gives you an opportunity to assess whether your qualifications and career goals align with the position

How do you prepare for an interview?

Follow the steps and tips below, and then make an appointment with the Career Center to discuss interview strategies and practice through a Mock Interview.

STEP 1: KNOW YOURSELF, THE POSITION & THE COMPANY

- Scan the job description to reflect on your personal fit for the position's required skills and experience
- Identify specific, relevant examples from your experience you want to illustrate during your interview
- Research the company using sites like Glassdoor.com, LinkedIn.com & social media to understand the company's mission, services, culture, clients, growth, and current challenges

STEP 2: PREPARE & PRACTICE

- Review *common interview questions* (see reverse) and generate responses related to the job description
- Be ready to talk about what you know about the company and why you are interested in working with them
- Identify questions you plan to ask the interviewer(s) at the end of the interview (see reverse)
- Develop 60-second personal stories using the STAR method (below) for *behavioral questions* (see reverse)

The STAR Method

Situation or Task: Describe a specific event or situation with enough detail for the interviewer to understand. Draw from campus, work, or community experience.

Action: Describe the action that you took. Focus on your role.

Results: What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

STAR Method Example: "*Please describe the most challenging patient experience you have encountered?*"

Situation or Task: During my internship, one of the male patients was uncomfortable having a female intern in the room, and he asked me to leave. My supervisor and I apologized, and I left the exam room right away.

Action: Later the patient complained to the front desk, so my supervisor and I approached the patient. I explained that I was in training, and that my internship was a chance for me to get on-the-job experience to make me a better medical assistant.

Results: We agreed that my supervisor should have asked his permission before I came into the exam room. By understanding the patient's point of view, the patient seemed to be satisfied when he left the office."

STEP 3: KNOW THE ESSENTIAL INTERVIEW TOPICS

While there are many questions that may be asked during an interview, employers are essentially aiming to hear your responses to a few key topics:

- Why are you interested in the position?
- What experience, technical skills, education, and/or training make you a strong candidate?
- How can you add value to their team/company?
- Are you passionate about the position? Do you want the job?

Common Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about your experience.
3. What motivates you?
4. Why should I hire you?
5. Where do you want to be ten years from now?
6. What is your greatest strength?
7. What is your greatest weakness?
8. How has your education prepared you for your career?
9. Why do you want to work in the ___ industry?
10. Why are you interested in our company?

Popular Behavioral Based Questions

1. Tell me about a stressful situation that you experienced. How did you handle the situation?
2. Tell me about your role in a team project. What did you do to contribute toward a teamwork environment? Be specific.
3. Give me an example of a time in which you successfully calmed down an irate customer. Now tell me about a time in which you were unsuccessful.
4. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
5. If I asked someone about your leadership style, what do you think they would say about you?

Sample Questions to Ask Interviewer(s)

Prepare at least two questions to ask the interviewer(s). You should always ask #1!

1. What is the next step in the hiring process? When should I expect to hear from the hiring committee?
2. What characteristics best describe a successful person at your company?
3. How would you describe the company culture?
4. What is the most rewarding or enjoyable part of working on this team?
5. What is the biggest challenge or goal this department will focus on over the next six-months?
6. How are new hires evaluated?
7. What are some typical first year assignments?
8. Please describe the training and/or professional development opportunities offered by the company.

STEP 4: THE LOGISTICS

Before the Interview

- ✓ Solidify the interview the logistics, time, and directions
- ✓ Ask the interview coordinator about the type of interview (i.e. group, panel, individual) and who you will be interviewing with
- ✓ Research the company and any specific interviewers
- ✓ Gather copies of your resume, a pen, and a padfolio

Day-of the Interview

- ✓ Interview begins in the parking lot—be courteous to everyone
- ✓ Arrive 5-10 minutes before your interview
- ✓ Leave cell phone in the car/turn it off
- ✓ Bring extra copies of resume

Dress for Success

- Dress appropriately for your workplace & research the company culture
- Err on the side of overdressing
- When in doubt, go with business professional attire
 - Conservative skirt or pant suit with a coordinated button-down shirt or blouse
 - Tie, dark socks, dress shoes, flats or pumps
 - Solid, neutral colors
- Keep it polished, simple & clean
- Have a dress rehearsal
- Invest in a padfolio or professional bag/briefcase

STEP 5: FOLLOW-UP

- Write a thank you note to your interviewer(s) within 24 hours
- Thank them for their time, reference your discussion, & reiterate interest in the position

SAMPLE THANK YOU EMAIL

SUBJECT: Thank you - Your Name, Interview

Dear (Recruiter's Name):

Thank you for the chance to interview for the Medical Assisting internship position with ABC Medical Group. This sounds like an exciting and challenging opportunity, and I want to reaffirm my strong interest in the position.

I was particularly interested in our discussion about the collaborative work environment and mentoring your team offers new employees. I'm confident the knowledge I've gained from my program at Ventura College would be especially beneficial as your team is focusing on enhancing your record management process. Additionally, I am excited to contribute to your patient outreach efforts with my bilingual language skills.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Best,

Your Name

PHONE & VIRTUAL INTERVIEW TIPS

Phone and virtual (i.e. Skype) interviews are popular and sometimes used as a first-round, screening interview. It is important to prepare for these interviews just as you would an in-person interview. In addition, you should take the following steps before a phone or virtual interview.

Before the Interview

- Confirm all aspects including who you will be speaking with and how you will be connecting (i.e. Do they need your Skype username? Will they call you?)
- Secure a quiet, comfortable, and private space
- Ensure you have strong connection/reception where you plan to interview, and consider using a headset and/or external microphone for sound quality
- Dress professional to impress for the camera (and the phone—it puts you in the right mindset!)
- Remove distractions, including background/décor that are visible through a webcam
- Do a test run
- Schedule a Mock Interview with the Career Center

During the Interview

- Silence incoming calls and notifications on your phone
- Evict all roommates and put a “do not disturb” sign on your door
- Have your resume in clear view
- Have a notepad and pen ready for note-taking
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly, smile to project a positive tone of voice to the listener
- Don’t smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink
- Don’t speak in run-on sentences that will not allow the interviewer to interject or ask more questions

TECHNICAL INTERVIEW TIPS

Technical interviews are generally used to assess candidates for technical or specialist (graduate-level) job positions, such as jobs in IT, Engineering and Science. Interviewers are not just interested in technical knowledge but also how candidates approach problems, construct their thought process, and demonstrate personal skills, such as communication. In a technical interview candidates are likely to be asked questions that:

- Relate to understanding the technical work required to be completed as part of the job applied for;
- Require candidates to solve actual technical problems that they would be likely to face if employed;
- Require problem solving through brainteasers or difficult numerical reasoning questions.

A quick online search can generate sample technical interview questions, videos, and tips to help you prepare for an upcoming interview.