

WHAT TO EXPECT

The goal of the interview

Interviewing is a chance for *you to assess fit with the company and position* and for the *employer to assess your match with the position and their organization*. Understanding the employer's perspective will help you anticipate questions as well as prepare answers to address the "real" question. The employer wants to know:

- Can you do a great job? How will you add value to our company?
- Are you a good fit for the organization? Will you be a good colleague?

Interview formats

IN-PERSON: This is the most common interview type. An in-person interview may be one-on-one or with a hiring committee panel. When scheduling, ask what to expect and who you will be talking with.

PHONE: It is common to go through a phone screening process before landing an in-person interview. You may use notes and have your resume and the job description in front of you to refer to! Make sure you have good reception, are in a quiet space and your phone is fully charged before the call.

VIDEO: Video interviews, either on a platform like Skype or short pre-recorded answers, are growing in popularity. It is an inexpensive and efficient way for employers to "see" you and get a sense of who you are. *Test your technology (the sound, video quality and scenery behind you) prior to the interview.* Be sure you know who will be calling whom and at what time (and time zone). *See our Virtual Interviewing handout online at www.careers.uw.edu/resources for more tips.*

How to prepare

Employers visiting the UW have told us that students' biggest mistake is a lack of preparation. **Use these tips to prepare for your next interview:**

- Research and share why you are interested in the company
- Review your qualifications for the job and be specific about the position you wish to fill. Be ready to discuss your strengths and share stories that demonstrate your skills and experiences
- Ask questions at the end of the interview

Types of interview questions

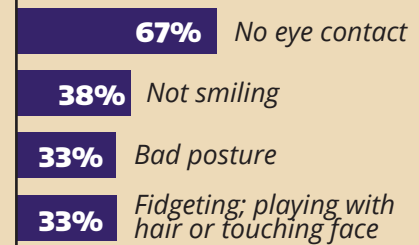
COMMON OPENING QUESTIONS

These are typical questions asked near the beginning of the interview:

- Tell me about yourself
- What do you know about our organization/company?
- Why are you interested in this position?

Non-verbal communication in interviews matters

According to a survey of employers, most common body language mistakes include:



5 common interview mistakes

- Missing the phone/video screening or interview
- Sending a generic (post interview) follow-up or not following up enough
- Following up too much
- Not asking any questions
- Not showing industry know-how

How to answer, "Tell me about yourself"

Structure your answer by sharing: present - past - future - strengths

1. Briefly share where you presently are in your life, education and/or career.
2. Mention important facts from your recent past.
3. Describe how this current position fits with your interests.
4. Mention strengths you've developed through your experiences that relate to this new role and company.

IN THE INTERVIEW

BEHAVIOR-BASED QUESTIONS

Employers in *all industries* believe that past actions predict future behavior. It's likely they will ask you to describe specific situations when you demonstrated a skill critical to the position. **Use the STAR method to respond effectively to these types of questions.** Examples include:

- Tell me about a time you solved a problem
- Give an example of an unexpected situation and how you handled it
- Tell me when you demonstrated your ability to work on a team
- Describe a project you led. What did you do to keep it on track?
- Share an example of when you experienced an interpersonal difficulty and how you dealt with it

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

Employers may try to test your knowledge or skills. Depending on the job, this may mean asking you to code, solve problems on a whiteboard, or define/describe a key skill. Research what to expect through websites like Glassdoor.com, and brush up on your technical skills before the interview. **Explain your thinking and problem solving process. Tell why you are doing things a certain way and your train of thought.**

CASE QUESTIONS

Case questions are when employers pose a *hypothetical scenario and ask you how you would handle it*. Demonstrate how you work through situations you would encounter by *showing the employer your thought process*. The answer isn't always as important as how you got there. **Explain the factors you are considering and why you are doing things in a certain order.**

Example questions:

- *What expectations do you have for this position within the first 30, 60, and 90 days on the job?*
- *What opportunities exist for advancement and professional growth?*
- *What will be the biggest challenge for the person in this position?*
- *What are the next steps in the hiring process?*

Questions to ask employers

Asking questions at the end of an interview shows your research and helps you evaluate fit with the position and company. Do not ask about salary, raises, benefits, flex-time, vacation, or questions that reveal you didn't thoroughly research the position or employer.

After the interview

57% of job seekers don't send thank-you notes after the interview, but doing so is a chance to reiterate your interest. Email or handwritten notes are acceptable. Thank-you notes should be sent after phone screening calls, as well. *Follow up* if you haven't heard a response in the time frame indicated to inquire about the status of the position.

The STAR Method

When telling a story, using the **STAR method** is the most effective way to organize your answer. The employer wants to hear *relevant, specific, descriptive examples of you using your skills*. Therefore, follow these 4 steps to answer clearly with a story.

1. **Situation:** Explain the context of what happened
2. **Task:** Tell what you were supposed to do
3. **Action:** Describe *in detail* the steps and actions you took to accomplish your tasks
4. **Result:** What you accomplished and learned. Use this as a time to connect your learning to the job you are interviewing for.

Questions you want to ask:

INTERVIEW PRACTICE

Practice these questions

Write down notes about what you want to share in an interview. Be sure to back up your answers with evidence (stories) and use the STAR method where appropriate (see page 29).

1. *Tell me about yourself.*
2. *Why are you interested in this opportunity with our organization?*
3. *Tell me about the experience that has most prepared you for this position.*
4. *What are your greatest strengths?*
5. *What project or experience are you most proud of?*

Get feedback

Now that you have prepared for these questions, give this sheet to a friend, family member or trusted advisor. Have them ask you a question and write down notes on your response.

1. *What did you like about this person's answer?*
2. *What is one way they could improve their answer?*
3. *How did they connect their story to the position they are interviewing for?*
4. *Nonverbal communication: Did you notice any nonverbal cues this person should be aware of?*