Interviews

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Types of Interviews

If you’ve been on multiple job interviews then you know that you might encounter a different environment depending on the company you interview with. This is pretty common because every company has its own culture. And more importantly, each company – and even department – instills its own interviewing strategy. Sometimes you know what type of interview you’re going to walk into and sometimes you don’t. So to be prepared for anything, let’s take a brief look at varying interview types.

1. Screening/Phone Interview
Often times, when you apply for a job, the company will look over your resume and cover letter as a sort of filtering process to determine whether you’re generally qualified for the job. However, on occasion, a company might go one step further by conducting what is known as a screening interview. In this interview – which might be conducted in person or over the phone – a representative will ask you some questions to determine your interest in the job and basic qualifications. If the interview is over the phone, be sure to have your resume, cover letter and list of qualifications in front of you.

2. One-on-one Basic Interview
Another interview type that you might be prepared for – and that is quite common – is the structured basic interview. In this type of interview, the interviewer will ask specific, predetermined questions meant to explore experience, skills and personality traits. The goal of this type of interview is to find the ideal candidate.

3. Group Interview
The group interview is pretty much just what you think it is. It is a number of representatives from the company opting to interview you at the same time. Often times, each member of the group is designated a style of questions to ask. Be sure to make eye contact with every person in the room, not just the one asking the question.

4. Behavioral Interviews
The basic idea behind behavioral interviewing is that past performance predicts future performance.

behavioral interviewers are looking for specific examples.
- Instead of asking how you would behave in a particular situation, the interviewer will ask you to describe how you did behave.
- The interviewer will ask you to provide specific details and examples of past behavior on the job.

How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview
- Recall situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially those involving coursework, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, communication and customer service.
• Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.
• Be sure each story has a beginning, middle, and an end.
• Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you.
• Be honest. Do not embellish or omit any part of the story.
• Be specific. Give a detailed account of an event.
• Use the S.T.A.R. method to help you prepare answers to questions.

What is the S.T.A.R. METHOD?

Situation or Task
Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

Action
Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.

Result
What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish or learn?

Second Interviews
Second interviews are typically longer and more in-depth than the 30-minute-1 hour initial (first) interview. Sometimes you will meet other candidates who are interviewing the same day. Normally, after meeting with a human resources manager, you will meet one or more co-workers and higher level executives. In addition, you may be given a tour of the facilities, spend a day in the field, or possibly take a series of tests. The day can be tiring, but it’s your best chance to find out the specifics of the position and how you will fit into the organization. It is also your best opportunity to convince the organization why they should hire you.

Be prepared. Make sure that you can describe your previous accomplishments and strengths, and articulate your short- and long-term goals. Have some good questions prepared for the employer. You may also be asked to prepare a presentation.

Quick Checklist – Before a Second Interview:
✓ Find out the name, phone number and job title of the person coordinating the interview.
✓ Request a detailed agenda, outlining the day.
✓ Be clear on any travel arrangements, including the organization’s reimbursement policy.
Before the Interview

Get to Know Yourself!
- What are your skills, accomplishments and goals? What do you have to offer?
- Identify work or school experiences that demonstrate your skills. Examples!
- What do you want to accomplish and where do you plan to accomplish it?

Research, Research, Research!
- Check out the employer’s website and learn as much about the employer beforehand as you can. What products, services, size, the number of employees, key competitors, and market trends do they have? Read their ‘About Us’ or ‘Mission Statement’ on their website. Make sure you understand the company!

Practice, Practice, Practice!
- Attend interview preparation workshops.
- Schedule a mock interview with Career Services.
- Continue practicing for the interview with a family member or friend.

First Impression
- Regardless of the dress code always dress professionally.
- Dress conservatively: suits preferred.
- Practice good hygiene and be well groomed.
- Wear simple jewelry and don’t overdo the perfume or cologne.
- Practice your handshake. You should always offer a good handshake.

What to Bring
- Bring several copies of your resume on professional resume paper. Also, bring several copies of your references sheet.
- Bring a portfolio or briefcase with a pad and pen.
- DO NOT bring your phone. Leave it in the car.

During the Interview

Be Prompt and Prepared
* Arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the scheduled interview time.
  * Give a firm handshake and smile.
  * Have your extra copies of resumes and reference sheets easily accessible.

Answering the Questions
* Answer the interviewer’s questions thoroughly yet concisely.
  * Speak slowly and clearly.
  * Don’t be afraid to pause for a moment to collect your thoughts.
  * Be HONEST!! Don’t try to cover up mistakes. Instead, focus on how you learned from them.
* Smile, be enthusiastic and ask meaningful questions about the position. A positive attitude helps.

**Closing**
* Be prepared with your closing statement reiterating your interest.
* Be prepared to ask questions of the interviewer.
* Remember - the initial interview is not the time to ask about salary!
* Thank the interviewer and ask for a business card so you may follow up.

## Interview Question Samples

Practice responding to these questions. You may find it helpful to write down key points and examples you can refer to. If you can answer each of these questions clearly, concisely and confidently, you are well on your way to a successful interview!

### College and Academic Experience
1. Why did you select Mount Aloysius College?
2. Why did you choose your major?
3. In which campus activities did you participate and what did you learn or gain from this involvement?
4. Have you ever dropped a class? Why?
5. Which college classes did you like the best? Why?
6. Which college classes did you like the least? Why?
7. What is your overall G.P.A.? What is your major G.P.A.?
8. Give me an example of a group project you worked on in the classroom.
9. Do your grades accurately reflect your ability?
10. Were you financially responsible for your education?
11. How do you balance a busy schedule of classes, clubs and extra campus activities?

### Work Experience and Accomplishments
12. Did you work in college? If so, where?
13. What did you enjoy most about your last job?
14. What did you enjoy least about your last job?
15. What did you learn from your most recent job?
16. Have you ever quit a job? Why?
17. Of which three accomplishments are you proudest?
18. What problems have you solved on the job?
19. Have you ever performed volunteer work? Where?

### Skills and Personal Qualities
20. Tell me about yourself. (Be prepared for this one. It may be the first question asked. Briefly highlight your career interests, studies, work experience and strengths.)
21. What are your greatest strengths?
22. Can you describe any weaknesses? How have you improved on these recently?
23. What skills have you developed?
24. Do you have any computer experience?
25. Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?
26. What public speaking have you done?
27. Who are your role models?
28. Do you have any hobbies?
29. Define success and failure.
30. Have you ever had any failures?
31. If a professor, co-worker or supervisor had to describe you, what would he/she say?

**The Job and Employer**
32. Why did you choose to interview with us?
33. What can you offer us?
34. How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
35. What do you know about us (products or services)?
36. What are your salary requirements?
37. Would you be willing to take a drug test?

**Work Environment**
38. Do you prefer to be supervised or work on your own?
39. Would you be successful working on a team?
40. Have you worked under deadline pressure? When?
41. Are you able to work on several assignments at once?
42. Do you prefer large or small companies? Why?
43. How do you feel about working in a structured setting?
44. How do you feel about working overtime?
45. How do you feel about travel?
46. How do you feel about the possibility of relocation?
47. Are you willing to work flextime?

**The Future**
48. Describe your ideal job.
49. Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years?
50. Do you plan to continue your education?
Dress for Success!

The first impression you make on a potential employer is the most important one.
The first judgment an interviewer makes is going to be based on how you look and what you are wearing. That's why it's always important to dress professionally for a job interview, even if the work environment is casual.

Remember an interview is a formal situation, so it's important to be aware of the details of your appearance. It's best to keep the color of your clothing understated. The focus should be on YOU -- not on your clothes. The idea here is to avoid anything that could distract the interviewer. A clean and neat professional appearance is an important step in making a good first impression.

Professional Attire Tips for Women

- Invest in a two-piece suit in navy, dark gray or black.
- A white or light colored long sleeve blouse for women is suggested. Make sure the blouse is not too sheer or low cut.
- A dark leather (professional) notebook or a portfolio big enough to hold your resume and notepad is suggested. Check out the campus bookstore for some Mount Aloysius notebooks!
- Shoes should be polished and in good condition. Make sure the heels are not too high (max: 1 ½ inches) and have a closed toe. Stay away from strappy sandals or anything too trendy.
- If you chose to wear a two piece suit with a skirt, make sure the skirt is no shorter than an inch or two above the knee. Also make sure to select a neutral tone or sheer black pantyhose.
- Hair should be clean and professionally styled.
- Practice good hygiene. Stay away from strong perfumes.
- If you do wear nail polish, make sure it is a light or clear color. Nothing that stands out too much.
- Wear minimal jewelry. (Ex: stud earrings, simple necklace) Stay away from bulky jewelry that you could potentially mess with during the interview as a nervous habit.
- If you have a tattoo, please cover it up. An interview is not the time to show off body art. (Example: If you have a tattoo on your wrist, cover it with a professional watch or simple bracelet.)

Professional Attire Tips for Men

- Invest in a two-piece suit in navy, dark gray or black.
- A white long sleeved dress shirt is suggested for men. If you select a color, make sure it is light.
- Button all buttons on your shirt, including the top button.
Select a tie that matches your suit/shirt in a simple pattern or solid color.
Wear professional black shoes. Shoes should be polished and in good condition.
Remember to wear dark socks!
You may want to wear a leather belt that matches your shoes.
Body piercing and tattoos should not be visible.
Make sure your hair is clean, cut and your face is freshly shaven or groomed.
Practice good hygiene. Stay away from strong colognes.
Nails should be trimmed and neat.

After the Interview

Send a thank you
- Send a thank you note right away. A handwritten note on professional cardstock or paper or a typed professional letter are suggested.

Make a list
- Jot down information about the interview, and begin evaluating if this is the right job for you. Make a list of pros vs. cons.

Learn from it
- Did the interview go well? Write down what you did well and what you can work on in the future. Didn’t go so well? Don’t sweat it. You can learn from this for the future. Next time, prepare even more. You will get better.

Research salary information
* Prepare for potential salary negotiations by researching salary information. Utilize websites like the NACE Salary Calculator found here: [http://www.mtaloy.edu/academics/careers/students-alumni/resources.dot](http://www.mtaloy.edu/academics/careers/students-alumni/resources.dot). Or utilize the website [www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com) for additional salary information by region.
Correspondence Letters

The following represent other types of correspondence that you might find appropriate at various stages in your job search. In each instance, these letters should be individually typed and addressed and should conform to the applicable standards previously discussed for the preparation of cover letters. Use business letter format with your address and the date in the upper left, and the person’s name and address on the left above the body of the letter.

THANK YOU LETTER

After you have had an interview or visit, a letter should be sent to express your appreciation for the opportunity to present yourself.

- Within 24 – 48 hours after the interview or visit, a letter should be sent to express your appreciation for the opportunity to present yourself.
- Use the letter to express your continued interest in the position and company. Some details of things that impressed you are a nice way to personalize your letter and convey your interest.
- Supply any additional information that was requested at the time of the visit or interview.

LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

Be professional but also tailor your letter to the specific employer, so you appear sincere and genuinely interested in the company and job.

- Write to the person who wrote and/or interviewed you.
- Thank the person and/or show your enthusiasm for the offer.
- State what you are accepting.
- Concisely, yet descriptively, give some details about what has impressed you about the company and/or interview.

LETTER DECLINING AN OFFER

It is courteous to turn down a job offer graciously and in a timely manner.

- Write to the person who wrote you.
- Thank her/him for the offer.
- Briefly state that you are declining and why (don’t get too personal).
Top Ten Interview Mistakes

1. **Don't Prepare**
   Background information including company history, locations, divisions, and a mission statement are important things to read up on before the interview.

2. **Dress Inappropriately**
   Dressing inappropriately can work both ways. You will certainly want to wear a suit if you are interviewing for professional position.

3. **Poor Communication Skills**
   Positively connect with the person who might hire you. Shake hands, make eye contact, exude confidence, and engage the person you are speaking with.

4. **Too Much Communication**
   Leave the cell phone behind or at least turn it off before you enter the building.

5. **Too Much Talk**
   There is nothing much worse than interviewing someone who goes on and on and on... The interviewer really doesn't need to know your whole life story. When you have answered the question and given appropriate examples, you can move on.

6. **Don't Talk Enough**
   It's really hard to communicate with someone who answers a question with a only word or two. So, even though you shouldn't talk too much, you do want to be responsive and fully answer the question as best you can.

7. **Fuzzy Facts**
   Even if you have submitted a resume when you applied for the job, you may also be asked to fill out a job application. Make sure you know the information you will need to complete an application including dates of prior employment, graduation dates, and employer contact information.

8. **Negativity**
   Negativity is not attractive in future employees. Keep it positive, no matter the question they ask!

9. **Badmouthing Past Employers**
   Your last boss was an idiot? Everyone in the company was a jerk? You hated your job and couldn't wait to leave? Even if it's true don't say so. It's sometimes a smaller world than you think and you don't know who your interviewer might know.

10. **Forget to Follow Up**
    Be sure to follow up with a thank you note reiterating your interest in the position and the company.