# Interviews

Washburn University Career Services
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***An interview is a conversation with the specific purpose of gathering information.***
As the candidate your goal is to make a favorable impression on the employer while gathering information about the position. The employer's purpose is to gather enough information to predict how well you will perform the position responsibilities and fit into the organization.

**Typical Interview Outline**
Professional job interviews tend to include the following components:

- Greeting/small talk
- Overview of the interview process/position
- You answer questions- this will likely be the longest segment of the interview, and the one with the most weight.
- You have the opportunity to ask the interviewer questions. Be sure to have questions for the employer, not asking any will not impress an employer.
- Closing- Ask the employer about the next steps of the process and the timeframe for hiring. Thank the interviewer and reiterate your interest in the position.

An interview may be as short as 30 minutes and as long as a day (or even more). When the interview is arranged, be sure to ask how much time you should reserve for the interview to avoid surprises.

**Types of interviews**
Not all professional interviews will be conducted in the same manner. These are just some of the interviews you may encounter during your job search:

*Phone interview*- The phone interview is typically used as a screening interview or when it is not convenient or possible to meet in person. The lack of non-verbal cues (facial expressions, body language, etc.) can make a phone interview challenging. Use this to your advantage by having your resume, the position description, and company literature in front of you during the interview.

*Group interview*- Group interviews tend to be used by employers as a time/cost saving measure, particularly when there are many applicants for one position. Although this can be intimidating, it also allows you to compare yourself to other applicants and focus on your unique strengths.

*Panel interview*- In a panel interview you will be asked questions by multiple interviewers. Make sure you maintain eye contact with each interviewer.

*Site interview*- Generally a site interview will be longer and involve meeting with a variety of individuals in the organization. Be prepared for a long day and ask for a business card from each person you meet.

*Meal interview*- If a site interview lasts for an entire day, it is likely that you will be dining with members of the search committee at least once. Although this provides an opportunity for more casual conversation do not let yourself be too relaxed or informal- this is still part of the interview. Refrain from alcohol.

***Behavioral Interviews-***
Many employers are using behavioral interview questions to assess candidates. Behavioral interview questions are based on the fact that the most accurate predictor of future behavior is past behavior in a similar situation. Interviewers will ask questions designed to gauge your behavior situations similar to those you would encounter in the position. The key to answering behavioral interview questions is to use specific examples to describe your past actions.

*The steps below will help you prepare for all types of interviews.*

**Before the Interview**
Identify situations when you demonstrated the skills outlined in the job description. Prepare brief stories, with specific details, about past situations and how you handled them.

**☆ Preparation**
Provide complete answers including the following 3 aspects of the situation. Keep the focus on you and your role, rather than the role of a group or organization.

***Problem/Situation***- Provide a specific situation; do not speak in generalities, or say that you "always" act this way. Detailed stories will be more meaningful to the employer and help you stand out from other candidates.

***Action***- Outline the steps you took in response to the situation.

***Result/Outcome***- What happened as a result of your action? Don't feel that every example must have a positive outcome; if the situation did not end as you would like, mention what you would do differently next time.

**☆ Research the organization/position**
Learn enough about the position and the employer to know why you want to work there and why you are a good fit for the organization. The company website is a great place to start your research and newspapers and trade journals can be helpful as well. Use your research to prepare thoughtful questions to ask during the interview.

**☆ Practice**
As with any skill, the best way to improve is practice! Schedule a Mock Interview with Career Services by calling 670-1450. During a Mock Interview you will have the opportunity to respond to questions typically asked in interviews and receive feedback and suggestions from a staff member. Writing down your interview examples (with the situation/action/result for each) can be another great way to prepare.

**Professional Dress**
As with your resume, first impressions are formed in the first 15 seconds of an interview so dress professionally and conservatively. A suit is considered appropriate attire for professional interviews. Choose a classic suit in a neutral color that can be worn in all seasons. Dress for the interview, not the position; you may not wear a suit to work every day but make the extra effort during the interview process.

**During the Interview** - Although you can never know for sure which questions you will be asked during an interview, the following are questions commonly asked during employment interviews.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position/organization?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
- What motivates you most in a job?
- Why should I hire you over other candidates?

*Behavioral Interview Questions:*

- Tell me about a problem you faced and how you solved it.
- Describe a time when you had to work in a group. What role did you take?
- Tell me about a time when you demonstrated your leadership skills.
- Describe a situation where you felt you had not communicated well. How did you correct the situation?
- Tell me about the most difficult or frustrating individual that you have worked with and how you managed to work with them.

Questions to ask the employer- The interview typically ends with an opportunity for you to ask questions. Make sure you have several thoughtful questions to ask. Do NOT ask about salary or benefits until the position has been offered.

- What kind of employee orientation is offered?
- How would my performance be evaluated?
- What attracted you to this organization?
- Why is this position open?
- What are the next steps in the interview/hiring process?

*Illegal Questions*- Employers are not allowed to ask questions that do not pertain to the job qualifications. Age, religion, marital status, ethnicity, and disability are a few of the categories that you are not required to reveal. If you are asked what you believe is an illegal question you have several options. You may ask how the information pertains to the position, choose to answer the questions, or move to the next question.

**After the Interview**

***Thank you notes***- After each interview send a thank you note within 48 hours. A thank you note may be an email, hand written note, or a typed letter. The form depends on the situation and your personal preferences. Be sure to mention any follow-up information that was requested at the interview and reiterate your interest in the position.

***Evaluate***- In order to improve on your interview skills you must take time after each interview to evaluate and reflect on the experience. Think about which questions you answered poorly and how you would answer them in the future.

***You only get one chance to make a positive first impression on a potential employer!***

Visit Career Services in Morgan 123 or call 670-1450 to make an appointment.

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**Develop your behavioral interview stories!**
Use the following to define the problem/action/result for several questions frequently asked by employers. Fill in other questions related to the skills/job responsibilities mentioned in the job description and provide specific examples for each.

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Question: Tell me about a problem you faced recently and how you dealt with it.

Situation-

Action-

Result-

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Question: Describe your leadership skills. Provide a specific example.

Situation-

Action-

Result-

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Question:

Situation-

Action-

Result-

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Question:

Situation-

Action-

Result-