

Interviewing Guide

PREPARING FOR ANY INTERVIEW (IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL)

1. **Know Yourself:** be able to articulate your skills and abilities, education, training, experience, top strengths/weaknesses, and career plans/goals.
2. **Know The Organization:** have a clear understanding of the organization's products, services, history, operations, growth and future prospects through thoroughly researching their website and LinkedIn page. You can also connect with any Oswego alum who is a former or current employee.
3. **Know The Specific Job:** have a clear description of the job and required skills so that your responses can reference specific aspects of the job responsibilities. You want to demonstrate your qualifications and communicate to the employer that you are prepared and did your research. Prepare at least five questions about the job and the organization.
4. **Know Your Career Field:** be able to discuss current trends and noteworthy issues in your field; read articles and job descriptions to familiarize yourself with typical responsibilities in the field and the qualifications needed to succeed; network with Oswego alumni, family, friends, faculty, and others in your desired industry to gain an inside perspective.
5. **Practice Makes Perfect:** practice answering anticipated interview questions multiple times - out loud. You need to get comfortable SPEAKING about your skills, experiences, qualities - not just THINKING about them.

AT THE INTERVIEW

- Arrive/log on at least 10 minutes early.
- Turn off your cell phone, and do not chew gum.
- Build rapport quickly with every person you interact with, including administrative assistants, greeters, etc.
- Be articulate: make sure that your response to a question is direct; rambling can come across as having your thoughts unorganized and therefore seem unprepared; interviewers prefer 5-10 seconds of thoughtful silence rather than 2-3 minutes of loosely connected thoughts. Don't be afraid of silence or to ask for a moment to think about the question.
- Avoid filler words: "um," "like," "gonna," "stuff like that," "ya know" "so yeah."
- Be professional but still be yourself: in addition to your education, experience, and skills, interviewers also want to get a sense of your personality. They want to bring on a new team member who will be enjoyable to work with and add value to their current team. Likewise, you will want to find an organization and team that matches your style.
- Use examples whenever possible: the best predictor of someone's future behavior is their past behavior; rather than simply saying, "I am really organized and hardworking," say, "I have strong organizational skills. I am the Secretary of the Psychology Club, an English tutor, I have a part-time job off-campus and I still have a 3.3 GPA, so I have to stay organized while juggling a variety of responsibilities."

CONSIDERATIONS FOR A VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

Phone or Video Tips:

- Identify ahead of time a quiet place with good reception/Wi-Fi.
- Speak clearly and not too quickly so that the interviewer can understand you without difficulty.
- Dress the same as you would for an in-person interview.
- Smile: even through the phone, it will come through in your voice.

Phone Tips:

- Keep a copy of your resume and the job description near you along with a list of your greatest strengths as they relate to the position - and examples to back up your strengths.
- Have the company website open on your computer/phone.
- Stand up to help with your energy level.

Video Tips:

- Test the video and audio technology beforehand; practice with a friend to get accustomed to it.
- Your background should be neutral, uncluttered, with no distractions.
- Have the camera at eye level and look directly at the camera, not the screen, so that you appear to be making eye contact.
- Pay attention to your body language; maintain good posture and relax your shoulders.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN IN-PERSON INTERVIEW

Nonverbal Communication

- **Posture:** sitting up straight communicates enthusiasm, professionalism, and confidence, while slouching can make a person appear disinterested/disengaged.
- **Handshake:** extending a firm handshake is considered courteous and can exhibit confidence. Be cognizant of individual sensitivities around physical contact - during the pandemic, for example.
- **Eye contact:** maintaining good eye contact with the interviewer(s) keeps them engaged while you speak, and shows that you are deeply listening while they are speaking.

Interviewing Guide (cont.)

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Traditional - straightforward questions about your experience, background, and personal qualities

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position/organization?
- Why should we hire you?
- Describe your ideal job.
- Describe your ideal supervisor.
- What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- Tell me about a past accomplishment.
- What have you learned from your failures?
- What motivates you at work?
- How would your coworkers/classmates describe you?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?

Behavioral - based on the idea that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior; they are looking for specific examples

- Tell me about a time when you worked on a team and dealt with a strong disagreement among team members. What did you do in that situation? (*Interpersonal skills*).
- Describe a time when you had to persuade a person or group of people (*Communication skills*).
- Provide an example of a time when you went above and beyond (*Initiative*).
- Describe a situation when you provided a creative solution to a problem (*Creativity*).
- Tell me about a time when you took a leadership role. What was the outcome? (*Leadership*).
- Describe a situation where you had many assignments and projects at the same time. How did you manage the competing obligations? (*Planning/Time-management*).
- Describe a time when you received constructive criticism (*Flexibility/Humility*).
- Provide an example of when you had to make a difficult decision, and explain your approach (*Decision-making*).

Context - What was the problem or matter at hand?

Actions - What steps did you take, and what skills did you demonstrate?

Results - What was achieved? And how does that relate to what the organization is looking for in an employee?

Case and Technical Questions:

Common in Business fields such as finance, consulting, accounting, in STEM fields such as engineering, physical science, and computer science, and in Education. Technical questions aim to gauge discipline-specific knowledge, which may be related to specific skills or concepts that you learned in courses. Case questions may often pose a situation to which you won't know the answer but will need to make an attempt, as the interviewer is evaluating how you approach the problem. Be sure to demonstrate your logical reasoning and thought process.

QUESTIONS TO ASK EMPLOYERS

Bring at least 5 questions to show the employer you are prepared, and to assess your fit with the organization!

Avoid asking questions that are answered in the job description or easily found on the company's website; do your research! Some examples are:

- Can you tell me more about the training provided to new employees?
- When and how are employees evaluated?
- What do you see in the next five years as being the organization's biggest challenge?
- How would you describe the culture of this organization?
- What do you think makes your company unique from the major competitors?
- How does your organization support employees of diverse backgrounds?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

As soon as possible following the interview, jot down notes about what the interviewer(s) shared; this will help you with your thank you notes, follow-up outreach, and with second-round interview preparation.

Thank You Notes:

Sending a customized thank you note via email to each interviewer within 24 hours after your interview communicates that you are courteous and that you are genuinely interested in the position. Most applicants do not send them, so you will stand out from the other candidates. Include a specific reference to your conversation with the individual to show that you were engaged. You can send a handwritten thank you note in the mail, in addition to the more timely email, to add a special touch.

Following Up:

One to two weeks after an interview is an appropriate amount of time to wait until following up. You can call or send a brief follow-up email to restate your interest and ask about your candidate status.