



CAREER SERVICES

Oklahoma State University
OKC Campus

Interview Resource Packet



The Purpose of an **INTERVIEW**

One of the main reasons that individuals feel anxious interviewing is being unsure of what to expect. This packet aims to address this anxiety by defining the structure, setting, and purpose of interviews.

1

Opening: The beginning of an interview is all about first impressions and presenting your "professional brand." This portion of the interview typically includes a professional introduction, and a detailed account of your experiences and what brought you in to interview that day.

2

Information: Most job openings have specified "minimum qualifications" or desired traits for it's candidates. The information phase of the interview typically includes basic qualification-focused questions to ensure you can perform the job. These include trait-based and "biographical" questions.

3

Evaluation: After gaining basic information, many interviewers will shift their focus to evaluating your ability to perform the job function and evaluate your "performance" against the other interviewees. This section typically consists of example, situational, and case-study type questions to evaluate how you would handle varied situations related to the job.

4

Closing: The final phase of an interview is all about wrapping up, restating your 'brand' and asking strong questions.

In-Person vs Virtual INTERVIEWS

In-Person

- Dress the part! Be sure you are crafting a strong professional image and first impression.
- Be thoughtful about your body language and eye contact.
- Attempt to keep the energy up and the employer engaged.
- Avoid too many 'ums' 'likes' or other fillers.
- Bring something to write with & extra resumes.
- Turn off your phone and smart watch.
- Address the entire interview committee, not just the hiring manager.
- Speak clearly and confidently.
- Be sure to offer handshakes at the beginning and end of the interview.
- Be confident!

Virtual

- Avoid distracting or flashy backgrounds, plain walls with minimum decoration are best.
- Dress the same as you would for an in-person interview (from head to toe!)
- Test your interview set up before the interview, have a friend call you the day before to test your connection.
- If possible, find alternative contact info for the employer in case of internet outages.
- Ensure that audio/visual are clear and easy to see.
- Communicate eye contact by looking at the camera when speaking, and the screen when listening.
- Using a phone can be acceptable, but laptop or desktop are preferred.

Researching the **COMPANY**

Be familiar with the company and position before you get to the interview. This should include the company's structure, products/services, job requirements, current events or things like the company's mission statement. See below for some specific tips and tricks.

1

Visit their website: Most companies will have a website that contains a “careers” or “employment” section of some sort. Become familiar with it! Look for information about the company's philosophy, tag line, goals, mission statement, philanthropic activities, etc. Be prepared to incorporate some of this information with your answers to the below questions that may arise during an interview.

- Why do you want to work for _____ company?
- What attracted you to our company?
- How do you believe you will fit into our organization?

2

Know the job description: Be sure you know the specific job for which you're applying. This includes the title, qualifications, experience, and characteristics they are looking for in applicants.

3

Know the industry: There are plenty of resources for getting to know various industries. This information might include public policy, labor statistics, salaries, required skills/education, etc. Use the below websites to learn more.

- Glassdoor.com
- Onetonline.com (Occupational Information Network – O*Net)
- BLS.gov (Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Research **YOURSELF**

Know Your Strengths and Weaknesses:

- Employer's look for candidates who know themselves! What are you good at? Where can you grow?
- Choose strengths that are easily identifiable. What experiences have you had to use your strengths? This could be work, class, or through personal experiences.
- Frame weaknesses as areas of growth. No employer expects a perfect candidate. Show the employer that you know your weaknesses, but more importantly show them what you're doing to **improve**.

Identify Your Value:

- What makes you the best fit for this position? How will you improve that company/organization?
- Identify unique traits you offer and explicitly state them to the employer.
- Demonstrate your research by identifying where your value aligns with the job description.

What Does Your Experience Say About You:

- Show, don't tell! Employer's want to know how you've demonstrated your value and abilities.
- Whenever possible connect your value back to specific experiences or examples where you applied your skills, this will indicate how you will apply those skills for the employer.

Prep Your Stories:

- A strong interviewer comes prepared with good stories and examples that showcase how you've been a valuable worker in the past.
- Brainstorm several stories that demonstrate things like leadership, flexibility, time management, conflict resolution, maturity, work ethic, or ability to learn.
- We recommend using the STAR method to structure your story telling.

Leveraging the STAR METHOD

1

The **STAR method** is an interview technique that gives you a straightforward format to use to tell a story by laying out the situation, task, action, and result.

- **Situation:** Set the scene and give the necessary details of your example.
- **Task:** Describe what your responsibility was in that situation.
- **Action:** Explain exactly what steps you took to address it.
- **Result:** Share what outcomes your actions achieved.

2

The STAR method can be used to answer **behavioral interview questions** (or any other kinds of questions where you need to tell a story). In other words, use the STAR method for those prompts that ask you to provide a real-life example of how you handled a certain kind of situation in the past (i.e., how you behaved in the past). Don't worry—these questions are easy to recognize. They often have telltale openings like:

- Tell me about a time when...
- What do you do when...
- Have you ever...
- Give me an example of...
- Describe a situation...



Interview

ITEMS & RESPONSES

The “Tell Me About Yourself” Question

Assume that you will be asked this question, and prepare your response ahead of time. Research the employer and the position to identify how you can make a valuable contribution. Prepare up to a **two-minute** commercial-style response, talking about your experiences, qualifications, and accomplishments rather than specifics of your childhood, family, or hobbies. You may include reasons why you developed a passion for your field as well as your long-range professional goals. Frame your answer as to how you can contribute to meeting the needs of the employer: “My background has been devoted to preparing myself to become the best professional possible. For example...”



Interview ITEMS & RESPONSES

What to Lookout for in an Interview:

While the vast majority of employers innocently want to get to know a candidate, there are **illegal questions employers should not ask** according to Title VII and/or The American Disabilities Act. These questions include discriminatory topics like sex, age, race, national origin, religion, or disability when they do not pertain to job duties. Again, most employers genuinely want to get to know you and are not intentionally asking illegal questions. When responding, it's important to remain positive if you want to keep the door for the job open. After the interview, you can decide whether or not you want to accept any potential offers. You are under no obligation to answer illegal questions but can decide whether or not to answer if you do not believe the employer had discriminatory purposes in mind. To learn more about how to respond or take action if you feel you've been treated unethically, you can make an appointment with a career consultant or visit www.eeoc.gov.



Interview ITEMS & RESPONSES

What Questions Do You Have?

1

You should have at least 4 to 5 prepared questions when you walk into your interview. However, you'll have to pay close attention when the employer is speaking because you should not ask questions that have already been answered in the interview process or could easily be found on the employer's website or at an information session. Write these questions down in your portfolio because you will inevitably forget them! You can also ask questions that arise during the interview about unclear points or specific information relevant to your discussions.

2

Typically, the employer will provide a space for you at the end of the interview by asking what questions you have for the company. This is your time to shine! The more specific your questions, the more memorable to the employer. While asking about the work atmosphere or trajectory of the position or company is good, asking more specific questions about the position or company based on the research you've done up front will set you apart. See below for some sample questions.

Sample Questions to Ask After an Interview

- What makes this firm different from your competitors?
- What qualities would the ideal candidate for this position possess?
- How does this position interact with the rest of the organization?
- What education and training programs does the company provide?
- What do you enjoy most about working for this firm?
- What challenges might I face in this position?
- How did you get started in the company? What made you successful?
- How does this job contribute to the mission or goals of the company?

Interview ITEMS & RESPONSES

Closing Statements

When the interview starts to wrap up, be sure to leave your interviewer knowing where you stand. If you are very interested in this opportunity, be sure to express that in a clear, enthusiastic yet professional manner. This means saying something like, "I have very much enjoyed learning more about your company and I am excited about continuing the application process." You also need to be sure to get clear information on how to move forward. Ask questions about the next steps in the application process, the timeline in which they are hoping to fill position, and any other questions you may have about the process.

Following Up

According to employers one of the most common mistakes interviewees make is waiting too long to follow up with a hiring manager or not following up at all.

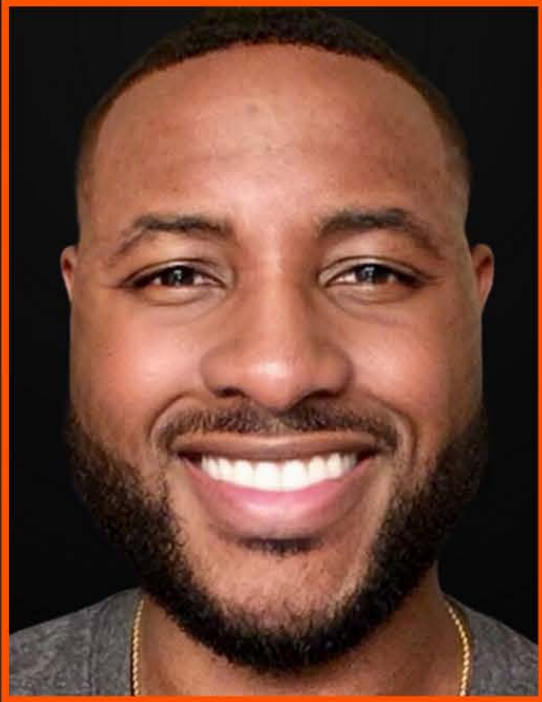
A good practice is to follow up with an employer by using a simple follow up email or handwritten thank you note. We suggest following up with the interviewer within **8-24 hours** following your interview.

What should your thank you message include?

- Who you are.
- What were your take-aways from your interview?
- How the employer can contact you.
- State directly, but firmly that you are excited to move forward with the process.

An email addressed to the entire interview committee is acceptable, but individualized emails are a great way to include an added personal touch.

Do you have
QUESTIONS?



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➡️ If you have any questions, please email
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➡️ Do you want to schedule an appointment?
D.J. accepts **virtual and in-person**
appointments via SLATE or SHAREPOINT.
Schedule [here](#).



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