

Interview Guidance

Types of interviews and how to effectively prepare to sell yourself.

Mock Interviews

A mock interview is an emulation of an interview used for coaching and training purposes and is considered one of the best ways to prepare for an employment interview.

Studies show that recording and reviewing mock interviews can relieve fears and help job candidates become more confident. Using an iPad or other tablet device, you can easily record, replay and critique your mock interview.

You will gain valuable feedback through working with a career advisor. Your career advisor will present you with commonly asked interview questions, view your performance from a recruiter's perspective and coach you on sharpening your interview presence.

You will also be able to pause the recording and isolate any issues such as mannerisms, posture, eye contact or answer structure. Using a comprehensive checklist, you and your advisor will discuss key points and suggestions to improve your interview.

Through continued practice, you will be equipped with skills and confidence in self-presentation and selling yourself.

Preparation Suggestions for Your Practice Interview

It is important that you properly prepare for your practice interview with a career advisor, mock interview with a business guest or other individual so that you can receive constructive feedback on how you can improve.

- Attend an "effective interviewing" workshop

- Practice in front of a mirror
- Practice answering typical interview questions. You can refer to the Interview Questions and Technical Questions Guides for help in selecting practice questions.
- Bring a copy of your resume for the "interviewer" to use.
- Casual clothing is fine for your practice interview with a career advisor, but we encourage you to wear professional business attire if you would like feedback on your clothes. Remember, professional attire is required for all "mock interviews" with business guests and the "real" interview.

Be prepared to...

- Walk through your resume.
- Answer why you selected USC Marshall.
- Answer why you would be a great fit for the position.
- Answer why you are interested in the company and industry.
- Tell about a time when you worked with a team – using the STAR format.

Top Five Most Asked Questions

- Tell me about yourself
- Walk me through your resume
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
- What are your career goals five years from now?
- Why should I hire you?

Remember: STAR

- ✓ **S**ituation: explain the situation you were in
- ✓ **T**ask: what you needed to do
- ✓ **A**ction: what you did
- ✓ **R**esult: the outcome

Effective Interviewing

Many companies use several types of interviews to get an all-inclusive sense of who you are as a potential employee. Ultimately, both parties are looking for the best fit, and the hiring process should be a two-way street.

Learning about the company and its culture prior to the interview will equip you with the effective interviewing skills needed for you to land the job.

Five successful steps to interview preparation

1. Know yourself
2. Know the position you want
3. Research the company and industry
4. Ask questions
5. Practice interviewing until you feel comfortable and confident

Types of Interviews:

- **Behavioral Interviews** assess your job-related technical skills, past performance, work habits and personal characteristics.
- **Case Interviews** focus on your ability to solve a business problem, which may be a problem the company has previously faced.
- **Technical Interviews** assess your specialized knowledge.

- **Phone Interviews** screen potential candidates. Recruiters often ask in-depth questions that have been previously reserved for the final interview.
- **Video Conference/Skype Interviews** enable employers to conduct distance interviews.
- **Onsite Interviews** provide you with the opportunity to get a firsthand look at the culture of the company.
- **Second-Round Interviews** serve as an opportunity for you and the company to get to know each other better and evaluate each other's fit before you potentially join the firm.

Interview Follow-up

Interviews are not over until you complete the "follow-up". Thank-you letters continue to be an important component of a successful job search strategy. In addition to politely acknowledging the time a recruiter has spent with you, thank-you notes are another opportunity for you to sell yourself. By writing a thank-you note, you not only have the opportunity to leave a positive impression on the interviewer's mind, but also allows you to continue to market yourself favorably.

Strong follow-up may be the difference in getting an offer or not. If an employer has two equally skilled potential candidates who both fit the organization, receiving professional, error-free, follow-up may tip the scales in one's favor.

Hard copy, handwritten or email?

Thank-you notes should be sent (within 24 hours) to all those with whom you met. It can be in the form of a formal letter, card, or, if you and an employer have primarily communicated by email, an email is acceptable.

Regardless of the form you choose, your thank-you note should be brief and written in a professional tone. Follow these guidelines for writing your thank you note:

- Begin by reminding the individual(s) of when the interview took place and the position for which you interviewed.
- In the first paragraph, thank the employer for his/her time in meeting with you.
- In the second paragraph, reiterate your interest in the position and specific details about the job that may have been mentioned by the employer. Relate your qualifications to the position and mention anything you feel will set you apart from other candidates.

Informational Interviews

Informational interviews help you decide whether a particular career is right for you and, if it is, how you can prepare yourself to work in that field. If you've already made a tentative career choice, informational interviews can help you learn how to get a job in that field and find out about the responsibilities, rewards, problems and issues inherent in a specific career – possibly before making a long term commitment of time or money to prepare for it.

When conducting informational interviews, be clear about your motives. Scheduling an interview for information when you really want a job interview can sabotage the contact's trust in you.

- Contact alumni; they are a great resource for expertise. Please be thoughtful and selective, and contact alumni for advice and insights only.
- Identify people who are knowledgeable in the career field you are researching. Ask people you know whether they have contacts in your field of interest

who might be willing to talk to you and whether you can use their names as a reference.

- Research the field, the person you will be interviewing and the organization for which the person works. Prepare relevant questions about the industry and functional areas.
- Your questions should be those that are best answered by a person in the field or company.
- An informational interview is one of the few interviews in which you are in control of the questions asked. Request the interview.
- Conduct the interview. Be conversational. Use your list of questions as an aid to help you keep the meeting focused.
- Follow-up. At the end of the interview, ask for other contacts who might give you different perspectives. Thank the person, and then follow-up with a thank you note 24 hours after your meeting.
- Don't forget to keep records of your discussions for future reference and "real" interview preparation.

Informational Interview Request

Make your request clear and concise – state who you are, why you are making contact, and what you are seeking. Asking for information, insight, and advice is a good starting point for the conversation.

Tips on Listening

One of the greatest compliments you can give another person is to let them know that you are listening to everything said. Many people have literally talked themselves out of a job by speaking instead of sitting back and actively listening. It takes real concentration to listen.

Good salespeople have learned to listen and then tailor their sales presentation to their potential client's needs

as presented in the first few minutes of conversation. The same holds true for meeting new people. They'll know you are genuinely interested in them when you tailor your comments to what they have just told you about themselves.

