

Interviews

Prepare for Interview Success

Preparing for an interview can seem intimidating. That is typically the chance for you to finally meet the potential employer and discuss why *you* are the best fit. Yet it's also important to remember that this is the time for you to see if the opportunity is a good fit for you.

Research and **practice** will be key to your success in an interview. You can make an appointment with a Hubbard Center adviser to schedule a mock interview to get a better idea of what to expect in a formal interview setting. All DePauw students also receive access to GlassDoor, a U.S.-based job and career site where interviewees can provide information on the format and structure of the interview, and employees can contribute with information on the company culture, salary, job growth potential, and more.

Before the Interview

- Research the organization, department, people, position, mission statement, industry themes, current events, etc., before you enter the interview room.
- Know yourself by reviewing which two or three qualities set you apart, and make a list of everything you have done (a master resume).
- Practice putting these two pieces together by scheduling a mock interview with a Hubbard Center staff member, peer, or adviser. See Appendix B for an exercise you can do with a friend.
- Have a portfolio (multiple resumes, work samples, etc.) and contact information to give your interviewer.
- Prepare solid questions to ask if they give you time. Some examples include:
 - What is the career path for this position?
 - Does the organization support ongoing training and education for employees to stay current?
 - How will my leadership responsibilities and performance be measured, and by whom?
 - Can you describe the company's (or division's or department's) management style?

During the Interview

Great interviews feel like conversations, and are not Q&A sessions. Be sure to show your respect to the interviewer, but work hard to make them feel comfortable, so they can see why you would be an excellent colleague. Unless they have indicated they want some silence to review material or write notes, treat this conversation like you would others, and fill that awkward silence with your curious, innovative enthusiasm.

- Arrive early (15 minutes) in professional attire.
- Remember to be courteous to everyone, give a firm handshake, and maintain eye contact, positive body language, and enthusiasm.
- Listen to the interviewer's description of the position; match your presentation skills to the interviewer's needs.
- At the end of your interview, thank the interviewer, and ask solid questions, such as:
 - The next step in the process
 - How to follow up
 - For their business cards and offer them yours

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Follow-Up

Write a thank you note to every person you met during your interview process. Be timely (within 24 hours) and personal. Reiterate your interest/fit for each person you contact.

Example:

Dear Mr. Smith,

Thank you for meeting with me on January 28 to discuss my qualifications for the Warehouse Manager position. After meeting with you and your staff members, I am even more excited about the prospect of joining your team. I especially enjoyed the tour of the facilities; it provided me with insight into the company culture and your dedication to the growth and development of your employees.

I believe that my communication skills and my past experience with solving complex problems align well with the objectives of this position. I am eager to prove myself as an asset to your team and believe that I am capable of playing an instrumental role in your vision for the future of ABC Warehouse.

Again, thank you for your time. I look forward to speaking with you again soon.

Sincerely,

(Sign here)

Jane Butler

Let's Get Specific: Dress, Questions, Alternative Interviews (Meals, Skype, etc.)

Men: Dress to Impress

- Your suit should be navy, black, or dark grey.
- Wear a long-sleeved shirt (in white for banking, finance, or consulting; you should dress conservatively on any interview, regardless of the career field or industry).
- Wear a conservative, matching tie.
- Wear a belt.
- Socks should be dark and should match the suit.
- Shoes should be conservative and leather (no brown shoes).
- Your hairstyle should be neat.
- Limit your use of aftershave.
- Trim your nails.
- If possible, take a portfolio with you.

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Women: Dress to Impress

- Your suit should be navy, black, or dark grey.
- Your skirt should be long enough that you can bend over and sit comfortably.
- Your blouse should be coordinated.
- Shoes should be conservative.
- Limit your jewelry.
- Make sure your hairstyle is neat and keeps your hair out of your eyes.
- Wear light make-up.
- Wear little or no perfume.
- Nails should be neat and clean.
- If possible, bring a portfolio with you.

Frequently Asked Interview Questions

Think about how to respond to these frequently asked questions. Some hints are included below:

- *Tell me about yourself.*
Answer in about two minutes. Avoid personal details; do not ramble. Touch on the relevant following areas: education/activities, work experiences, and career interests. Highlight your strengths and provide examples.
- *Why should I hire you?*
This is where you should really sell yourself.
- *Highlight the areas of your background that relate to the employer's needs.*
Recap the interviewer's description of the job, matching it with your skills.
- *What are your long-term career objectives?*
Employers want to see that you are thinking about the future. A good way to answer is to identify yourself with the profession you want to get into. Also, consider incorporating the company that you are interviewing with into your future.
- *What is your greatest strength?*
Isolate high points in your background and back your answer with an example.
- *What is your greatest weakness?*
If there is a minor part of the job that you lack knowledge, but will gain it quickly, use that. Put the weaknesses in the past. You are working on ways to overcome the weakness. Always end on a positive!
- *What qualifications do you have that will make you successful?*
In addition to your academics, add relevant experiences that you have obtained outside of the classroom that demonstrate your strong points.

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- *Why are you interested in this position? Industry? Company?*
Your research prior to the interview should provide you with the answer to this question. Tell them what you have read about their company and mission. Reply with the company's attributes as you see them.
- *Why did you choose DePauw University?*
This question tries to examine your reasoning processes. Focus on the practical.
- *Can you work under pressure?*
Do not just give a yes or no answer; elaborate with specific examples.

Other Common Questions

- How do you define success?
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your capabilities?
- What motivates you?
- What have you learned from extracurricular activities (or a particular activity)?
- What has been your greatest achievement?
- What kind of leader are you?

Behavioral Questions

The best predictor of your future behavior is your past behavior or performance. Behavioral-based questions are used to provide the recruiter with real examples of how you work or respond. **Utilize the STAR** (Situation, Task, Action you took, Results you achieved) method to answer these types of questions effectively. Be specific, give details, and focus on how you contributed to the result. Remember, the recruiter may follow-up for more specific details.

- Tell me about a time you dealt with conflict.
- Describe a time when you had to share unpopular information/when you had to deliver bad news. How did you approach the task?
- Tell me about a time you have had to think quickly under pressure.
- Tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult decision.
- Describe a situation where you had to prioritize your time to get your work done.
- Give me an example of a time a teammate wasn't pulling his/her weight. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you sold an idea to someone else.
- Tell me about a time when you solved a problem.
- In a work environment, when have you had to tell other people what you thought?
- When have you had to be particularly creative dealing with a problem?
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Tell me about a time when you have been a particularly effective member of a team.
- Describe a situation where you wished you had acted differently with someone at work/school.

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Case Questions

There are three types of case questions: Guess the Number, Brain Teaser, and Business Problems. The interviewer often does not know the answer to case questions, nor is there a right or wrong answer. They are most interested in the way your mind works and how logically you approach the problem. When an interviewer asks you a case question, you are encouraged to ask your own questions. This accomplishes several objectives, which include:

- Allowing you to obtain more information that will make answering the case question much easier.
- Even if you do not receive additional information, you have shown the interviewer that you are not shy about asking questions in difficult situations.
- It helps to turn these questions into a conversation.

Roleplay Questions

Some interviewers like to ask you to roleplay, posing questions that will force you into a specific situation. You might need to imagine you are a second-grade teacher asking for funding for a field trip, or a VP solving a marketing problem for your CEO. Stop and think for a moment before you begin to answer.

Industry-Specific Questions

It is important to have done some research on the industry before interviewing for a job in the field. Ken Coquillette, managing director of a major investment banking firm, says, “Don’t even try to interview for an analyst position if you aren’t reading the *Wall Street Journal* daily.” Even for entry-level positions, some interviewers will want to get a sense of how much you know about the industry. For example, they might ask you a question like, “Can you explain the difference between an investment bank and a commercial bank?” Questions like this will be much easier to answer if you have done your research and kept up-to-date on industry-related trends. Additionally, talking with a DePauw graduate or another mentor who works in that field will give you some insight into common conversation topics.

Alternative Interviews

Meal Interviews

- Do not forget why you are there. The focus is not on the meal you ordered, but on the interview you are having. You should be engaged in conversation; it is acceptable if you do not eat all of your food.
- Select your menu item carefully, choosing foods that are not the most expensive on the menu and that will be easy to eat without being messy (BBQ ribs and cherry tomatoes, for example, can be messy).
- Use proper dinner etiquette (contact the Hubbard Center if you have questions about this).
- Even if you are over 21, it is inappropriate to have alcohol during a meal interview; this applies even if your host has a drink.

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Skype or Phone Interviews

Dress to impress...

- You should dress like you would for any other interview – no matter how much of your outfit you think your contact can actually see. This is true even for phone interviews as dressing the part will make you feel and project professionalism.
- Since employers may contact you by phone, be sure to have a professional voicemail message on your phone. For example: “Hi, you have reached <your name>. Please leave your message at the tone and I will return your call as soon as possible.”
- On the Internet, “dress to impress” includes your profile picture and username. Choosing both a professional picture and username will prevent your contact from misjudging you or having to start off by asking awkward questions.

Stage your setting...

- You should pay special attention to your location for a virtual interview. Look for an uncluttered area with good lighting; a messy or poorly lit background is distracting and can reflect badly upon you.
- Make sure your area is quiet, your phone is silent, and your friends and family know not to bother you. This may include putting a sign on your door and locking yourself in.
- Reserve a room in the Hubbard Center if you are concerned about finding a quiet space.

Supporting documents...

- Have a hard copy of your resume, cover letter (if applicable), job description, and questions you would like to ask. This way you can reference them easily, if necessary.

After the interview...

- Be sure to inquire about how to follow up.
- Write an e-mail and follow it up with a hand-written thank you note as soon as you are off the call.