

# Interview 101

## ::: Guide



## Preparation

### Know the Organization

- Dress professionally for your interview, guidelines and tips can be found [HERE](#).
- Know what service or product it provides.
- Familiarize yourself with the mission, vision, and values.
- Research the size of the organization and organizational structure.
- How much potential for advancement is there?
- Who are the organization's officers, administrators, etc.? Review their background and recent achievements.

### Know Yourself

- Be able to talk about your short and long-term goals.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Be able to demonstrate skills and knowledge you've gained from academic work and experience.
- Be able to talk about how you deal with challenges, conflicts or failure.
- Understand the type of work environment you thrive in.
- Know what qualities you're looking for in an employer.

### Communicate Effectively

- Anticipate typical questions and prepare answers.
- Be able to discuss your résumé, experiences and accomplishments.
- Use specific examples when answering questions.
- Consider signing up for a mock interview to practice your interview skills out loud.

The interview is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your interest and knowledge of the organization to an employer. It is also an opportunity for you to learn whether your values align with that employer or institution.



## Salary

Research salary ranges by position, job level, and location.

- [NACE Salary Calculator](#)
- [OnetOnline Wages & Employment Trends](#)
- [Occupational Employment and Wage Estimages](#) (by geographic area).
- [CareerOneStop Salary Finder](#)

## Planning

### **Pre-recorded/timed video**

These vary depending on the platform used, but you will be recording your answers to interview questions. It may be timed, or you could be given the opportunity to re-do your answer. Regardless, you should practice for a pre-recorded interview the same as you would for other types.

### **Phone**

Since the interviewer can't see your face, it's important to convey enthusiasm, sincerity and friendliness through your voice. Remember to speak clearly, and dressing professionally will boost your confidence.

### **Video**

Use a laptop, tablet or desktop, not cell phone. Make sure your camera angle is looking straight at you. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer and keep your hands in your lap to keep them still.

### **In-Person**

Confirm the location in advance. Bring extra copies of your résumé in a padded portfolio.

### **Presentation or performance**

In some situations, especially academic settings, you may be asked to lecture or present in your area of expertise in addition to participating in other kinds of interviewing

# Interview

## Before

- Know the type of interview, and plan accordingly.
- Arrive on time or a little early, dressed appropriately in business professional for the industry.
- Know the types of questions that are common for the industry you're interviewing for and prepare to answer them.
- Prepare thoughtful questions to ask the interviewer. Make sure to not ask questions that can be easily searched online.
- Make sure all technology is working properly, and choose an appropriate location if interview is virtual or by phone.
- If traveling for an interview, confirm logistics regarding interview itinerary and travel costs. Pack light, and use carry-on luggage for interview outfit essentials.

## During

- Make sure your cell phone is on silent and you've brought any requested documents.
- Answer the questions completely but don't become long – winded.
- Avoid discussing salary and benefits unless the employer brings it up.
- Smile and be authentic when answering questions.
- Make note of who you spoke with.

## After

- Thank the interviewers for the interview opportunity.
- Send thank-you notes or emails to each interviewer, if possible, within 24 hours of the interview.
- Evaluate your interview. What did you do well? What could you improve upon? Did you like the organization?
- Keep a record of next steps.
- Follow up as necessary and stay positive!





# Questions

## General

- What specific goals, other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself for the next 10 years?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- What do you really want to do in life?
- How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?

## Behavioral

- Describe an example where you worked as part of a team.
- Tell me about a time when you stepped up and took a leadership position without being asked.
- Describe a time when you utilized organization tools to keep yourself on-task.
- Tell me about a time when you motivated others.
- Describe a situation where you included others in a task that would have been easier to do by yourself.

## Emotional

- Tell me about a time when you felt unfairly criticized by your superior.
- Tell me about a time when you tried and failed.
- Describe a situation when you underwent significant stress. How did you cope?
- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a co-worker or team member. What did you do?
- Describe a situation when something was better left unsaid. How did you make that determination?



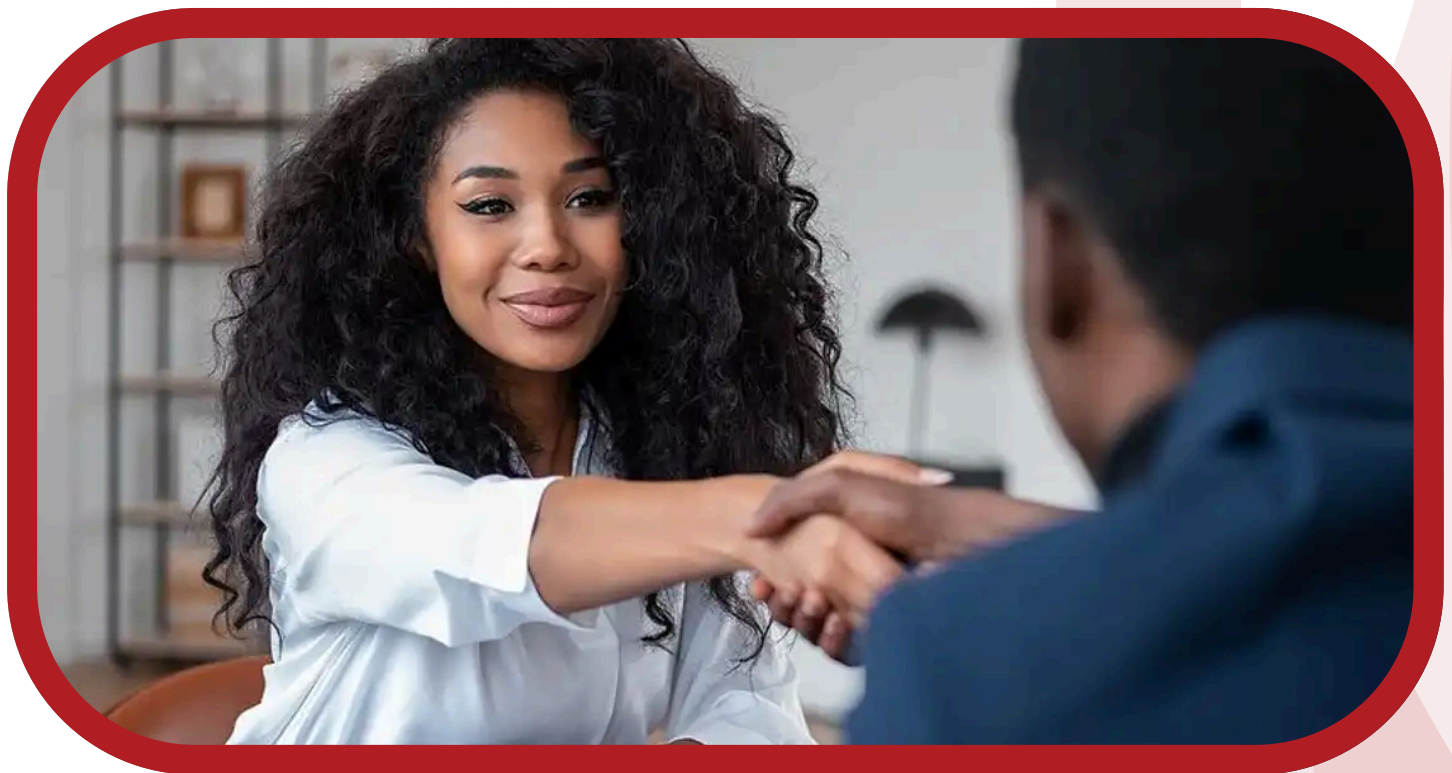
## Questions

### Technical Knowledge

- How many VW Bugs would fit inside a 747 aircraft carrier?
- You own a large chain of banks. You are tasked with determining whether or not it would be best to continue supplying personnel to staff each banking location or to employ an ATM option for your customers. What do you decide to do?
- You are the leader of a seven-person team on a project with a deadline fast approaching. You have noticed the productivity of your team members declining over the past week and suspect that morale is dropping. What do you do?

### Atypical Questions

- What college subjects did you like best? Like least? Why?
- If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
- Fork, knife, or spoon. Which do you pick?
- You are lost in the forest close to nightfall. The temperature is rapidly dropping. You know there is a town close by, but you are unsure of the actual distance. You have a compass, a flashlight, a canvas tarp, a lighter, and a canteen of water. You only have the strength to carry two of these items with you as you attempt to find civilization before the temperature drops too low for survival. Which do you take?



## S.T.A.R. Method

The S.T.A.R. Method is a simple formula to use when answering behavior-based questions.

### **SITUATION**

Give context: who, what, where, when, why, how.

*"My supervisor was given the task to plan and present a team building workshop for our entire staff. She was already overwhelmed so I offered to do some research create some ideas."*

### **TASK**

What had to get done? What was your goal? What obstacles were in the way?

*"I began researching team building workshops online and found some great ideas that I thought would work. I was also able to connect with a colleague who had attended a similar workshop recently who shared his thoughts on his experience."*

### **ACTION**

What steps did you take and why? How did you execute a plan?

*"Using what I learned in my research and speaking with my colleague, I created an agenda with activities for the entire workshop and presented it to my supervisor."*

### **RESULT**

What was the outcome? Was it what you wanted/expected? What would you change next time?

*"My supervisor was so impressed that she used my exact agenda and activities without making any changes."*



## Reflection

Make each interview a learning experience. As soon as possible after the interview, reflect and write down what you have learned. Ask yourself:

- Was I well prepared and able to integrate my research into my responses?
- Did I speak clearly and articulately, demonstrate enthusiasm and avoid verbal fillers?
- Did I sit in an upright and natural manner and use appropriate eye contact, and hand gestures?
- Did I connect my background and skill sets including transferable skills, to the position and/or industry?
- Did I prepare appropriate follow-up questions for the employer?
- Which questions were most challenging and why?
- What did I do well?
- How can I improve for my next interview?

Evaluating your interview performance is also a way to keep track of important information about each interview such as who interviewed you, and any items that may come up in a second interview.

## Case Interviews

A case interview is an interactive way for an employer to test a candidate's knowledge on industrial trends, logical but creative solutions, and ways to implement change. This is most common in the business and information technology industries. Although there is generally no correct answer, you are expected to ask the interviewer logical questions regarding the case, then make a thorough recommendation to solve the problem.

The characteristics of case interviews include:

- Situation-based interview questions
- No right or wrong answer
- Assessing logical and creative-based critical thinking skills

These questions can include real-world problems that the company is working/has worked on. For example: You may be asked to analyze a decline in profits for a particular service or resource, identifying why that would be the case, and offering recommendations and implementations on addressing this issue.



## Tech Interview

Companies utilize the technical interview to assess specific technical knowledge required for the occupation and the organization. This type of interview assesses a candidate's problem solving skills, reasoning abilities, and technological skill level. Interview components can include at-home challenges, phone screenings, in person questions and assessments that can include puzzles, writing exercises, pair-programming, and coding problems. A critical part of understanding the technical interview process involves inventorying your skill set and experiences. Consider:

- What technical-based courses (i.e. Data Structures and Algorithms) have I taken?
- What relevant class projects or certificates did I complete?
- What transferrable skills did I develop through my experiential learning opportunities (i.e. internships, shadowing, part-time jobs) that can translate to this position?
- How do I articulate my competencies built through personal projects or other work?



# Checklist

## Companies

### Organization Knowledge

- ☐ Annual Report, especially the letter to Shareholders
- ☐ History
- ☐ Mission statement
- ☐ Company leaders (CEO, etc.)
- ☐ Organizational structure
- ☐ Principle products/line of Business
- ☐ Primary locations
- ☐ Stock price/trends; PE ratio
- ☐ Annual revenue
- ☐ Capitalization

### Industry Knowledge

- ☐ Industry background/ general information
- ☐ Competitors
- ☐ Relative size in industry/ market share
- ☐ Industry trends and facts
- ☐ Industry-specific terminology

### Current Events

- ☐ New product/lines of Business
- ☐ Recent news articles about company and/or industry



## Checklist

### Nonprofit Organization

#### Organization Knowledge

- ☐ Mission and services
- ☐ Population(s) served
- ☐ How the organization refers to its constituents —clients, guests, patrons, members
- ☐ Executive Director, CEO or President of local, regional, national, and/or international levels
- ☐ Income and assets; sources of funding and percentage of each to overall funds
- ☐ Local, regional, national, and world aspects of the organization
- ☐ Size of local and/or national organization
- ☐ Volunteer structure and size
- ☐ Board of Directors
- ☐ Partnerships with community, other agencies and organizations, corporations
- ☐ Initiatives, achievements, and impact measures from the Annual Report

#### Sector Knowledge

- ☐ Current size, numbers served, number of employees within the nonprofit sector
- ☐ Sector trends and current economic state

#### Current Events

- ☐ Recent news articles about the organization
- ☐ Recent articles about the topic or population of concern to the organization



## Checklist

### Government Agency

#### Organization Knowledge

- ☐ Public service mission
- ☐ Top position titles and names in agency
- ☐ Level of government at which the agency functions (city, state, federal)
- ☐ Branch of government
- ☐ Recruiting terminology
- ☐ Size and jurisdiction of office and its parent agency
- ☐ Political appointments, elected, and hired positions within the agency
- ☐ Partnerships with nonprofit organizations
- ☐ Contracts and business relationships with for profit organizations
- ☐ Relationship of government agency to other government departments or agencies; differences between focus of public services and connection between them

#### Sector Knowledge

- ☐ Sector trends and current economic state

#### Current Events

- ☐ Recent news articles about the organization
- ☐ Recent articles about topics relevant to the agency's focus and services







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# Interview 101 Guide

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