

Your Guide to a Confident First Interview

(updated July 1, 2025)

An interview isn't just about being evaluated - it's also your chance to learn more about the organization and decide if it's a good fit for you. While every interview is different, you can set yourself up for success by focusing on what *you* can control.

Here are some essential tips to help you feel prepared and confident:

Before the Interview

1. **Confirm the details**
Know the format (virtual, in-person, phone, panel, etc.) and who you'll be meeting.
2. **Choose appropriate attire**
Dress professionally to match the role and company culture.
3. **Know where you're going**
If in person, plan for parking, directions, and arrival time.
4. **Prepare thoroughly**
 - Research the organization's mission, values, and recent news
 - Review the job description and highlight key qualifications
 - Create "prep cards" with examples for common interview questions
 - Practice out loud using your notes to stay focused but conversational
5. **Use available tools and support**
 - Schedule a mock interview with a Career Coach
 - Practice using LinkedIn or AI tools like ChatGPT to refine responses

Day of the Interview

1. Silence your phone before arriving or logging in.
2. Arrive 5 - 10 minutes early (whether online or in-person).
3. Bring extra copies of your resume, cover letter, and references.
4. Make a strong first impression. Greet your interviewer confidently with a handshake and a smile.
5. Maintain positive body language - make eye contact, smile, nod, and sit up straight. All of these behaviors exhibit "warmth" and are an important part of the selection process.
6. Answer clearly and concisely, tying your skills and experiences to the job.
7. Use real-life examples to support your answers whenever possible. People connect to the stories that you tell.
8. Confirm next steps and expected timeframe to help manage your expectations.

After the Interview

1. Send a thank-you message within 24 hours - email is typically best.
2. Reflect on the experience - What went well? What could you improve? Consider every interview a learning opportunity to improve into the future.
3. Track next steps and follow-up if you haven't heard back by the expected date.

Types of Interview Questions

1. The Big 5 Interview Questions

These core questions are commonly asked in most interviews and help employers understand who you are, why you're interested, and whether you've done your homework. They include:

1. Tell me about yourself
2. Why are you interested in this position?
3. Why should we hire you?
4. What do you know about our company or the role?
5. What questions do you have of us?

Your responses should not be generic - use specific examples or short stories that show how your interests, values, and experiences align with the job and company.

Preparation Tip: Tailor your answers to the job description. Use AI tools like ChatGPT to practice answering these questions, brainstorm relevant examples, and refine your delivery. Ask it to act as an interviewer to simulate a real conversation.

2. Self-Knowledge Questions

These questions focus on your understanding of yourself - your strengths, challenges, choices, and values. Examples include:

1. What are your greatest strengths or weaknesses?
2. Why did you choose your major or field of study?
3. What motivates you?

Employers are looking for authenticity and insight - but also relevance. The key is to back up your answers with brief stories or examples that demonstrate how your traits and decisions connect to the position.

Preparation Tip: Reflect on your academic and personal journey. Use tools like ChatGPT or talk with a Career Coach to help you draw connections between your experiences and the role you're applying for. Focus on communicating growth and alignment, not perfection.

3. Behavioral Interview Questions

These questions usually start with "Tell me about a time when..." and are designed to understand how you've handled real-life situations. Topics often include teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, conflict, or working under pressure. Employers want to hear clear, structured stories that demonstrate skills they're hiring for. Use the STAR method (**S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esult) to organize your response, always tying it back to the job's key competencies.

Preparation Tip: Identify 5-7 experiences - jobs, projects, internships, or activities - that reflect your strongest skills. Even general experiences can be made powerful with the right structure and relevance.

Helpful Websites/Resources

1. Your Career Coach. Visit our website to schedule an appointment: www.wku.edu/career
2. Video Resources: [CareerPrepped](#)
3. ChatGPT or Other AI Tools
Ask for practice questions, simulate a mock interview, or get help writing STAR stories.