



A photograph of four people (three men and one woman) sitting around a table, engaged in a discussion. One man is holding a green cup, and another is holding a pen over a notebook.

Interviewing Skills

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A square QR code located to the right of the contact information.



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Voiland College Career Services

Workshop Objectives

What would you like to know?

Question Types?

What to say?

How to prepare?

Etiquette?



Preparing for Interview

- Research the employer
- Wear business professional interview attire
- Bring a quality pen, folio & copies of resume, cover letter, job description, reference list, and blank paper to take notes
- Research road map, driving time, and parking options
- Ask about the format of the interview (one-to-one, panel, presentation)
- Develop a list of your top skills and experiences that match the job qualifications in the position description

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Improper Interview Attire (even at the career fair)



Dress for Interview Success

Women's Attire

- ☐ Business suit
- ☐ Conservative hair style
- ☐ Minimal jewelry
- ☐ Avoid perfumes and other fragrances

Men's Attire

- ☐ Business suit
- ☐ Tie (silk is better)
- ☐ Leather shoes (lace up preferred)
- ☐ Avoid after shave lotion (yes, please shave!) and cologne

Cougar Closet - <https://ascc.wsu.edu/cougar-closet/>

Proper Interview Attire



Types of Interviews

Screening Interview

- Determine if individual meets the minimum qualifications
- In person, over phone, or video

Tip: Emphasize that you possess the desired skills/abilities

One-on-One Interview

- Most common interview format
- Usually conducted on site by hiring supervisor
- Focus on questions that assess skills, knowledge, and abilities as they relate to the job

Tip: Really try to sell your key strengths

Types of Interviews

Panel Interview

- Group interview usually conducted by 3+ people
- Generally ask questions that correspond to their areas of expertise

Tip: Direct your answer to the person who asked the question, but maintain eye contact with other members

Peer Group Interview

- Group interview with potential co-workers
- Evaluating and making recommendations as to whether you “fit”

Tip: Focus on being agreeable and approachable rather than someone with all the answers

Interview Question Types

Technical

To evaluate your:

- Technical knowledge
- Assess Critical Thinking (how do you arrive at an answer)
- Stress Management

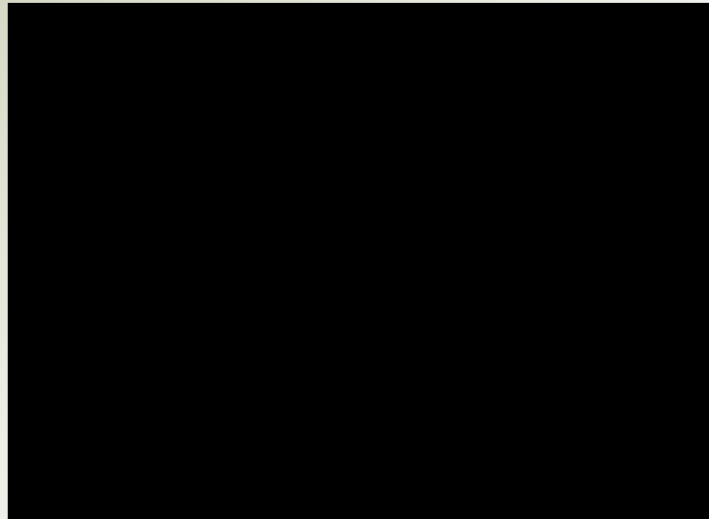
Tip:

- Faculty, peers, alumni
- Mock interviews
- Cracking the Coding Interview (Book)
- [CodingInterview.com](https://www.codinginterview.com)
- Google YouTube Coding /Engineering Interview

Example Questions

1. What is multiple inheritance? What are its advantages and disadvantages? **Tip: Tests knowledge of common topics and critical thinking skills**
2. What language have you programmed in? What is your preferred language and why?
3. Explain the difference between a digital and analog circuit. Which is more flexible? **Tip: Use straightforward and direct language.**
4. Give me a sample of something that uses single phase power. Three phase power.

Microsoft Tip: SOARA



Interview Question Types

Traditional

To evaluate your:

- ▣ Skills
- ▣ Knowledge about organization
- ▣ Attitude
- ▣ Confidence
- ▣ Appearance
- ▣ Ability to do the job

Example Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why are you interested in working for us?
3. How will you contribute to this organization?
4. What do you expect from this job?
5. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?



Example: Tell me about yourself

PAWS Technique

- **Profile:**
How did you become interested in the field (personal projects, extracurricular, memberships)?
- **Academic:**
Educational background (degrees, certifications) and other training
- **Work:**
Paid or unpaid experience related to job
- **Skills:**
Technical skills that relate to the position and relevant transferable skills

Practice

Tell me about yourself.

PAWS:

Profile
Academic
Work
Skills

Interview Question Types

Behavioral

- To evaluate experiences & behaviors
 - ▣ Prior behavior is a good predictor of future behavior

Tips:

- Research company and review position information
- Answer thoroughly using STAR technique

STAR Technique

- **S**ituation (what, where, when, who)
- **T**ask (or problem)
- **A**ction (what you did)
- **R**esults (or outcome)

People don't remember when you tell them you're good at something. They remember when you tell them a story that PROVES you are good at something.

Interview Question Types

Typical behaviors employers seek:

- Adaptability / Flexibility
- Communication – Oral and Written
- Attention to detail
- Decision making
- Listening
- Problem solving / critical thinking
- Planning and organizing
- Presentation skills
- Teamwork
- Technical knowledge

Behavioral Interview Questions

1. Tell me about a time when you influenced the outcome of a project by taking a leadership role.
2. Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
3. Tell me about a time when you had to use good communication skills to solve a problem.
4. What past experience have you had that best demonstrates your conflict management skills?
5. Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.

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Interview Question Types

Scenario/Situational

- ❑ Questions about future behavior / Role play
- ❑ You are asked to assess a situation and tell how you would handle it
- ❑ Involves problem-solving and critical thinking skills

Tips:

- ❑ Think before you speak
- ❑ Draw on past experience, if possible
- ❑ Don't pass the problem or task to someone else
- ❑ Answers should show your good teamwork skills and leadership qualities

Situational/Scenario Questions

1. Your shift is currently short-staffed and everyone has been asked to take turns working extra hours to help out. You've already worked late once this week, but a coworker called in sick and now your supervisor is asking if you can fill in again. You have plans with friends after work. How would you respond?
2. What would you do if a client phoned you to say that a pump is not working? How would you solve the problem? What if that solution didn't work?
3. You've been assigned a major project and are halfway through when you realize that you've made a mistake that requires you to go back to the beginning to fix it. How do you handle that while still trying to make your deadline?
4. You're a team leader. What would you do if the work of one of your subordinate team members was not up to expectations?

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Interview Question Types

Case Study Interview

- Typical interview method for professional service firms.
- Given a client situation; analyze problem & offer advice to solve it (timed)
 - ▣ Product Case Studies
 - ▣ Prediction/Modeling Case Studies
 - ▣ Business Case Questions
- Involves problem-solving and critical thinking skills

Tips:

- Research formats
- Practice, practice, practice
- Look at slide show/materials provided before you answer

Case: Software Quality Improvement

The R&D department of a major bank has discovered that more than 30% of the software development division's time is being spent fixing bugs in in-house-developed software. They wish to decrease this time so as to increase overall productivity. What do you recommend?

- **Identify the Structure of the Problem**
 - Product differences? Profitability or the extent to which they are affected by bugs?
 - Codebase -- how many lines of code are involved, the relevant technology being used and any dependencies
 - Generally, secure data broken down by product, module etc.
- **Lead the Analysis and Provide Recommendations**

For example:

 - Targeted testing: unit and/or automated user acceptance
 - Code review: automated with tools or by peers
 - Set team coding standards to be enforced via review
 - Targeted refactoring (it would be impossible to refactor everything, as the cost would be too high)

Can they ask anything?

NO!

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
(EEOC) says:

*It's illegal to discriminate against an
employee or applicant.*

Illegal Questions

- ☐ Age
- ☐ Race, ethnicity, or color
- ☐ Country of national origin or birth place
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Disability or genetic information
- ☐ Sex, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation
- ☐ Marital or family status, or pregnancy

Sample Illegal Questions

- ❑ What arrangements are you able to make for child care while you work?
- ❑ How old are your children?
- ❑ When did you graduate from high school?
- ❑ Are you a U.S. citizen?
- ❑ What does your wife do for a living?
- ❑ Where did you live while you were growing up?
- ❑ Will you need personal time for particular religious holidays?
- ❑ Are you comfortable working for a female boss?
- ❑ There is a large disparity between your age and that of the position's coworkers. Is this a problem for you?
- ❑ How long do you plan to work until you retire?
- ❑ Have you experienced any serious illnesses in the past year?

What do you say if asked?

- ❑ There may be a hidden agenda. A question about child care might be because they want to know if you can work overtime or travel. You may say, “Why do you ask?”
- ❑ Gently point out that it's not an appropriate question or that you don't feel obligated to answer, or
- ❑ Steer the conversation back to any job-related or skill-based topics.
- ❑ If you feel you've been a victim of discrimination through the hiring process, you can file a charge with the EEOC or file a lawsuit through an employment attorney.

Tips

- ❑ **Note-taking:** Generally, no
- ❑ **Being Stumped:** Remain calm and focused. Ask for clarification or ask for a few moments to think about your answer (but not too much time)
- ❑ **Negative Questions:** Short answer. Be honest and discuss a real issue. When asked about “weakness,” indicate steps taken to overcome weakness.
- ❑ **No work experience:** Talk about relevant courses, workshops, volunteer or internships, extracurricular activities.
- ❑ **Low grades:** Be brief & honest. Tell steps you’ve taken to remedy the situation. Tell them if you’ve improved.
- ❑ **Ask questions:** Always have one or two prepared questions to ask at the end of the interview (regarding the job, company culture, future steps in the process, etc.)

References

- ❑ Make sure to bring a list of at least 3 references (e.g., professor, supervisor, advisor)
- ❑ Not a parent or relative
- ❑ Include complete contact information and how they know you

References

- **Questions your references will be asked:**
 - ▣ How would you describe the candidate's reliability and dependability?
 - ▣ What are the candidate's strengths and weaknesses?
 - ▣ What was one of the candidate's more memorable accomplishments while working for you?
 - ▣ What type of work environment do you think the candidate would be most likely to thrive in – and why?
 - ▣ What skills would you have liked to see the candidate develop to reach their full potential?
 - ▣ Would you recommend this candidate?

Following Up After the Interview

- Prepare and ask **questions** for the employer
- Request **business cards**
- **Express your thanks** for the interview opportunity
- Inquire about the **best way to follow-up**
- Send a **thank you** card or email **within 24 hours**. Mention a particular part of the interview like a conversation you enjoyed or something similar.
- If you don't get the job, consider contacting interviewer for **feedback**. Learn from the experience.

Virtual Interview Best Practices

- ❑ Turn your camera on! Webcam at eye-level
- ❑ Well lit room – don't rely on monitor for light
- ❑ Neutral background (avoid patterns, colors)
- ❑ Keep the space tidy & quiet
- ❑ Turn off appliances, phones, devices that might create ambient noise or interrupt

Virtual Interview Best Practices

- ❑ Secure animals
- ❑ Eliminate possible distractions and interruptions
- ❑ Allow enough “alone time” to answer your questions -- 30 minutes to 1 hour

Virtual Interview Best Practices

- Practice with the webcam before the interview
 - ▣ Look at camera, not computer screen (or person on the screen)
- Don't rush. Speak slowly and distinctly, but don't dawdle either.

Virtual Interview Best Practices

- Practice answering questions under a time limit to help formulate concise answers.
- Practice eliminating filler words – “Umm,” “Like,” “I mean,” and “you know.”