
CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

University of Louisville

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louisville.edu/career

Services & Resources:

Career Counseling
Job Search/Employment Counseling
Graduate School Advisement
Career Decision Making Assessments
Cards CareerLink (Online job database)
“What to do with a major in...” Series
Résumé & Cover Letter Review
Mock Interview Preparation
On Campus Recruitment Program
Professional Etiquette Dinner
Annual Career Fairs
Career Workshops & Events
Individual Appointments & Walk-ins
Online Resource Library
Classroom & Group Presentations

Interview Planning Guide

What is an Interview?

The interview is the last step of the hiring process and the most important. It offers both you and the employer the opportunity to meet one another, exchange information and come to tentative conclusions about “hiring” one another. The interview is a two-way process. You evaluate the employer while he/she evaluates you.

What Steps Do I Need to Take?

Preparation is the key component to successful interviewing. Follow the interview preparation steps within this planning guide.

Does UofL Offer Assistance with Interviewing?

Yes! UofL’s Career Development Center provides mock interview and interview preparation resources for students and alumni. The purpose of a mock interview is to provide you with an opportunity to practice the interview and get direct experience responding to specific questions about what you want to do, why, and how your background has prepared you for the position. Connect to our website or stop by our office to schedule a mock interview.

For additional information, visit our website: louisville.edu/career

Interview Preparation

Research the Employer

Learn as much as you can about the company prior to going to the interview. Visit the company’s website and access any available company literature. Know the services, products and mission of the employer.

Research the Position

Find out as much as you can about the position. Analyze the position description, matching your experiences, interests, and abilities to the position. Talk with people who have worked in similar positions and research the salary range that is typical for the position.

Know Yourself

Know your resume inside and out, be able to discuss comfortably your qualifications, skills and abilities, and your personal goals and values. Write down your accomplishments and prepare concrete and specific examples of these. Anticipate questions that may be asked of you.

Know the Interview Format Ahead of Time

It is a good idea when scheduling an interview with an employer to ask with whom you will be interviewing, how long should you plan for the interview and what kind of format will it follow. Discovering this will help you prepare for and visualize your interviewing experience.

Make a List of Questions to Ask

The questions you ask may reveal your level of interest in the position, the employer, and your preparedness for the interview. Ask questions that demonstrate a genuine interest in and knowledge of the company and position.

Guidelines for a Professional Image

Is what you wear to an interview important? Yes, because it makes your first impression. Employers observe everything about you, your handshake, eye contact, your posture, how you walk in to the room, and your clothing and accessories. Your goal is to look professional, be confident and portray this to a prospective employer. You want to project an image that matches the requirements of the position and the organization.

Choose clothing, jewelry, fragrances and accessories that are not distracting.
Choose professional clothing that you feel comfortable in/good about.
Conservative suit colors include navy blue or charcoal gray with a traditional white shirt/blouse.
Shoes should be comfortable, conservative, clean and polished; dark colors are your best bet.
Dark socks for males and neutral hosiery for females are suggested.
Clothing should be clean, neatly pressed and fit well.
Make sure your hair is clean, neat and styled. Nails need to be clean and groomed as well.
Limit jewelry and accessories, remember to wear a watch.
Perfume or cologne should be light fragrances and never strong.
Avoid chewing gum during an interview or smoking before an interview.
Professional dress can vary from field to field. It may be helpful to talk with people employed in that field and ask their advice.
Emphasis should be placed on your qualifications and on what you say.

General Interview Stages

Introductions

The common exchange of names, small talk, casual questions while you are being escorted to the place of the interview; this is your first chance to make an impression. Topics may include weather, traffic, hobbies, etc. (designed to make you more at ease/relaxed).

Broad Questions and Answers

The interviewer will begin to ask you questions about yourself, your education, your past work experience, other items on your résumé, your interests and goals. You may also be asked questions about the organization and the job position. Questions may include: "Tell me about yourself," "Why did you choose your major?" "What are some of your extracurricular interests?"

Position Related Questions

The interviewer concentrates more on the details of the job and the company and how you might fit in. You will be able to discuss how your experiences and qualifications fit the requirements of the job. These questions require the most preparation in advance and include: "What types of contributions do you see yourself making to this company?" "How has your experience and education prepared you for this position?" You should ask pointed questions about the job and company based on your previous research. In addition to skills and qualifications, the interviewer will be looking for signs of your work ethic and your values.

Conclusion

The interviewer will summarize what has been said and clarify any questions you may have. This is when you need to reiterate your interest in this company and position and stress again how you are uniquely qualified for the job. The interviewer should explain the next steps in the recruiting process and how and when the next contact with you will be made. If the interviewer doesn't do this, ask them for the information before you leave. Ask for a business card so you can send a thank you note with the correct information. Refrain from discussing salary or benefits unless the interviewer initiates it. This will be discussed when you are definitely being considered for the job or when a job offer is made to you.

Before the Interview

- Know why you are interested in the company and in the position that you are interviewing.
- Know the exact time, place and location of the interview, find out how long it will take you to get there and what the parking situation is.
- Arrive early enough to allow yourself extra time to relax before the interview.
- Dress appropriately; exhibit good grooming.
- Get a good night's sleep in order to be well rested and alert.
- Anticipate possible questions and practice answers to each of them.
- Prepare your questions to ask the interviewer.
- Carry a portfolio with you, including: extra copies of your résumé, references or reference list, transcripts, certifications, work samples, pen/pencil, pad, and an appointment calendar.
- Be enthusiastic; have an absolutely positive attitude.
- Make a good first impression.
- Introduce yourself to the secretary/receptionist and follow the instructions you are given.
- Greet the interviewer by name; address the interviewer by first name if invited to do so.

During the Interview

- Offer a firm handshake during introductions, try to match their style of handshaking.
- Be aware of nonverbal behavior, make eye contact and control any nervous habits.
- Relax, be yourself and think of the interview as an exchange of information.
- Listen carefully to questions and give clear, concise answers.
- Ask questions regarding job-related issues that will provide you with helpful information and will demonstrate your knowledge of and interest in the position and in the organization.
- Inquire about follow-up procedures and thank the interviewer for his or her time.

After the Interview

- Write down everything you feel you handled right and wrong. Note any information you may need to include in your thank you letter. Use the interview as a learning experience.
- Always get the contact information of everyone involved in the interview process (name, address, title, email address). Ask the secretary/receptionist or ask for business cards.
- Send a thank you letter. Be sure to reiterate your interest in the position/organization.
- If you do not hear back from the employer within the prescribed time, make one follow up phone call to find out the status of the search process for the position you interviewed for.
- Follow up your interview by sending a thank you note that reaffirms your interest in the job.

Thank You Note Format

Your Contact Information

Employer's Contact Information

Dear Mr./Ms.,

Thank you for the chance to interview with ABC Company this afternoon. I came away feeling very enthusiastic about the position. The opportunity to combine independent research with team report production is just what I am looking for. I am also very excited about the possibility that my strong interest in evaluation of early-education programs matches the need you have for someone who can quickly grow to contribute in that area.

If you have any more questions for me, please be in touch. Again, thank you for your time in our interview, and for considering me as a candidate for the position of researcher on your team.

Sincerely,

Sign your name

Type your name

Sample Interview Questions

- Why do you feel you are qualified for this position?
- Tell me about yourself (your background, interests, etc.).
- How would you describe yourself?
- What qualifications do you have that will make you successful in the field?
- Why did you select the University of Louisville to attend?
- What college subjects did you like best/least? Why?
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievements?
- How much effort did you put into your course-work?
- Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree? Why?
- How has your college experience prepared you for a career?
- What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
- What are your skills (leadership, organizational, interpersonal)?
- What is your supervisory and or management style?
- Have you had previous experience in supervising a staff or other individuals?
- Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and an employee.
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing? How did you choose it?
- In your present or last position, what aspects did you like the most/least?
- How would a previous employer, professor, or friend describe you?
- Why did you decide to seek a position with this firm?
- What do you know about our organization?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in an organization like ours?
- What contributions can you make to our organization?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
- What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- How do you work under pressure?
- How do you handle criticism?
- Talk about a situation where you had to convince someone to see your point of view.
- Talk about a situation where you had to deal with someone who was being difficult.
- Tell me about a time where you had a major disagreement with an employer and how you handled the situation.
- Describe a time when you had to deal with the public. Who was involved? What did you do? How did those involved respond?
- Tell me about your most challenging leadership role. What was your role in the group and what was the result?
- Give me an example of an important goal which you have set and tell me how you reached it. What steps did you take?
- Describe a situation that required you to do a number of things at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?
- Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?
- If you and another co-worker are working together and you end up doing a majority of the tasks and getting half of the credit, how would you handle it? What would you do?
- What are your long-range and short-range goals, personal and professional?
- What do you see yourself doing five/ten years from now?
- If you were hiring someone for this position, what qualities would you look for?
- What do you feel this position should pay?
- What questions do you have about this company, the position, or anything related?
- What additional information can you tell me, that we haven't covered so far, that would make you the ideal candidate for this position?
- Why should we hire you?