

## Tips to “Nail That Interview”

### Be prepared for any type of interview

Ask about the interview style *before* the interview. Be prepared for any of the following:

- Phone interview
- One-on-one interview
- Sequential interview
- Panel interview
- Group interview

### Know the job, the company, your fit for the position *and* your resume

Remember your targeted resume got you noticed! Refresh yourself on the details of the job and the company. Be prepared to talk about your fit and your skills and qualifications for the position. Your resume has told the story but you must be able to “talk the walk”.

### Be your best you and create a winning impression

Employers want to hire individuals that appear friendly and will fit in their company culture. They want to know you can play well in the sandbox with your fellow employees! Look sharp and dressed to impress; maintain good eye contact; have an engaging smile; offer a firm (but not strong) handshake; and project a confident you!

### Know your responses to today’s interview questions

Don’t wait until the night before the interview to figure out your responses to today’s interview questions. You may likely be competing against other individuals who have already blown previous interviews *and* now know how to respond more appropriately to interview questions! Whenever possible, squeeze in a role play interview with a Talent Center representative to tune up your skills before the actual interview!

### Conclude the interview with energy and confidence

How you end the interview can help solidify a favorable first impression. You have nailed the employer’s questions and have asked insightful questions of the employer. The employer will want to know if you have any last thoughts before the interview is ended. Consider the following:

**Confirm your interest in the job:** This is a great time to express your enthusiasm for the job. *“Now that we’ve had a chance to meet and discuss the opportunity, I’m even more excited about the possibility of working here.”*

**Ask for the job offer:** If you are sure you want the job after the interview, tactfully ask for the job offer. *“I want you to know that I am very interested in filling this position for your company and I welcome hearing from you with a job offer.”*

### Follow up and follow through after the interview

Employers like to receive “thank you” expressions after the interview is over. Don’t expect them, however, to be available for you to thank them directly. Be prepared to immediately write your personal thank you note shortly after the interview and leave it for the interviewer(s). You may also choose to send an email thank you response or leave an after-hours message for the interviewer(s).

# “Tell me/us about yourself”

Is the most popular question that often begins the set of interview questions. First, consider what the interviewer is really trying to address with this question. What does the employer really want to hear? Here’s what’s typically going through the interviewer’s head while listening:

- “Should I continue this interview?” “Is he/she a good fit for the company culture?”
- “Do I want to work with this person every day?” “Why does this person want to work here?”

In addition to the questions listed above, the interviewer is discovering how articulate you are, how confident you are and generally what type of impression you would make on other people at the job. Preparing a thumbnail sketch for your interview will help. Your answer to this opening question should be no more than two minutes long. Do not answer this question with your entire job history and all data about each relevant job; that information is contained in your resume. Consider using the following format:

Part 1 15 seconds	Part 2 30 seconds	Part 3 60 seconds	Part 4 15 seconds
Tell them where you are from and about your education	Provide a brief overview of your work history	Discuss your last or most relevant experience	<b>Tell them or sell them!</b> The reason I’m here today is because...
Beginning Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Originally from _____</li> <li>• Spent ____ years in _____</li> <li>• Identify any degrees, certifications or qualifications that match the employer requirements.</li> </ul>	Provide a brief overview ( <b>not</b> blow by blow description) of various careers or positions you have experienced.  You may want to say “over the years, I have been successful in a variety of careers / positions, including...”	What relevant internship, practicum, volunteer or work experience have you had lately?  Describe a typical day in the position that is closely related to the position for which you are interviewing.  Give an example of a key accomplishment that is relevant to the position.	Concluding comments: (Tell them or sell them!) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a bridge from your last position and tell them what motivates you to consider this position.</li> <li>• What interests you in the company?</li> <li>• Why might you be a good fit for this position?</li> <li>• Let them know if you feel confident you have the ability to come onboard and be successful in the position.</li> </ul>

### What you *don't* tell them.

If you simply tell someone about yourself without planning your context to the target job you are there to interview for, you could blow the opportunity.

Prepare in advance with your answer to this question. *Without answering carefully*, you could share all kinds of information that leaves them with the impression that you are:

- Over-qualified or under-qualified
- Disorganized
- Inarticulate and a bad communicator
- Someone who doesn't understand the opportunity or the employer
- A risk for the company

# “Tell me/us about yourself”

## Practice

Write down the name of a business you would like to interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Write down the title of a job for which you would like to interview: \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Part 1</b> 15 seconds</p> <p>Your education or background as it relates to the job</p>	
<p><b>Part 2</b> 30 seconds</p> <p>Provide a brief overview of your work history</p>	
<p><b>Part 3</b> 60 seconds</p> <p>Discuss your last or most relevant experience</p>	
<p><b>Part 4</b> 15 seconds</p> <p>Why I'm here today is because</p>	

## S – A – R

### *Tell me about a time when you...*

<b>SITUATION</b>	State the <b>S</b> ituation
<b>ACTION</b>	Tell about your <b>A</b> ction
<b>RESULT</b>	Share the end <b>R</b> esult

#### Why should you use the SAR format?

- Situation:** The interviewer wants you to present a recent challenge and situation in which you found yourself.
- Action:** What did you do? The interviewer will be looking for information on what you did, why you did it and what the alternatives were.
- Results:** What was the outcome of your actions? What did you achieve through your actions and did you meet your objectives? What did you learn from this experience and have you used this learning since?

#### When answering these questions:

- Think of a specific example that is work/volunteer related and answers the question
- Get directly to the point, your answer should be no more than 2 –3 minutes long
- Discuss only the facts needed to respond to the question
- Don't open yourself to areas of questioning that could pose difficulties for you
- Be truthful, but do not offer unsolicited information
- Remember to pause and think through your answer before starting – know where the story ends before you start talking

#### Example of a SAR Response

*Can you tell me about a time when you overcame an adverse situation?*

**(Situation)** I was asked to lead a project team that was supposed to deliver a new product to market within a short time frame. Several team members believed that the company was making a mistake by developing this new product line and were reticent to commit the time necessary to make the product launch a success.

**(Action)** So at our first meeting I invited the Brand Manager of the new line to our project team meeting. He had an opportunity to describe the strategy that led to the development of the new product line and to introduce the research data that suggested it would be successful. He also took questions from the group and responded to a lot of the objections some group members had in a straightforward manner. I then arranged for the project team to receive regular updates from brand management on market research developments and the creation of the products advertising and promotional strategy.

**(Result)** Some team members maintained their skepticism, but as a result of understanding the strategy behind the product and being kept in the loop on the promotional strategy they maintained their commitments to the project. We launched on time and our initial sales exceeded our targets.



# Top Interview Questions

## About you

Tell me about yourself.

Describe yourself in one word.

What three major qualities do you possess?

Tell me about your energy level.

If I asked your co-workers to describe you, what three words would they use?

How would your superiors describe you?

What training have you had during the past two years?

How does stress on the job affect your work performance?

What do you see yourself doing in the next three to five years?

## About the company and the job for which you are interviewing

What do you know about this company?

Why do you want to work for our company?

What interests you about this job?

What are your qualifications for this position?

How do you rate your computer skills – more basic, more intermediate or more expert?

What are your greatest strengths that you bring to this position and our company?

What is your greatest weakness that we should know about?

What is your greatest training need for this position?

What sort of contribution will you make to a team?

What can you contribute to this company?

What can you do for us that other candidates can't?

Why should we hire you over another candidate with more experience or education?

If we hire you, how long will it take for you to make an impact in the position?

How do you maintain effective working relationships with your co-workers?

## About your attitudes, preferences and work habits

Describe your ideal job.

What motivates you?

What de-motivates you?

What type of work environment appeals to you most?

What sort of people do you find most difficult to work with?

Do you prefer working independently or as part of a team?

What was the last thing that annoyed you at work?

What characteristics are most important to you in a good manager?

How do you feel about forgetting your experience and learning a new method from scratch?

### **About your success strategies**

How do you define success?

How do you handle stress?

How do you schedule your time and set priorities?

What are your team player qualities?

How do you handle criticism?

How would you characterize your energy level?

### **About your previous employment**

Why did you leave your last job?

What are/were your major responsibilities in your current or most recent job?

What work experiences have been most valuable to you? Why?

What did you enjoy most about your current or most recent job?

What did you enjoy least about your current or most recent job?

What accomplishment on the job are you most proud of?

### **Curious, strange, odd or funky**

Name a person you particularly admire. Why?

What book have you read recently? Why?

If you could be an animal, what animal would you be? Why?

If you were a color, what color would you be? Why?

If you were a shape, what shape would you be? Why?

If you were part of a salad, what part of the salad would you be? Why?

**Top behavioral interview questions and the reasons for those question**

Describe a situation where something you did had a negative outcome. What did you do to turn the situation around? **Accountability**

Recall a time when your leader assigned you a task you considered outside your job description. How did you handle situation? What was the outcome? **Adaptability**

Please provide details of a time when you had a miscommunication with a co-worker. Were you able to resolve issues on your own and what steps were taken to communicate this? **Communication**

Give an example of a time when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle him/her? **Conflict Resolution**

Tell me about a specific situation when you did not have the knowledge or skill to complete a task or assignment. What did you do? **Continuous Learning**

Tell me about a time when you had to cope with strict deadlines that created stress or made you uncomfortable. Provide an example. **Coping Skills**

What was your most difficult decision in the last six months? What made it difficult? **Critical Thinking**

Describe a time when you did not have all the information you needed to make a completely informed decision. What did you do? **Decision Making**

Describe a time when you had to do a job that was particularly uninteresting. How did you keep yourself focused and motivated to complete the task? **Diligence**

Give me an example of a time when your work was above standards. **Excellence**

Give me an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision. What happened and what did you do? **Exercising Good Judgment**

When you are at work and have idle time, tell me how you utilize that time. What other tasks did you perform to fill that time? **Initiative**

What personal or work related goals have you established? How successful were you in accomplishing these goals? **Goals (Setting and Measuring)**

Give an example of a time recently, when you were a group leader and you had a specific task to accomplish. What was the assigned task and what was the outcome? **Leadership**

Tell me about a time you made your job interesting when the work became repetitious - **Motivation**

Tell me about a time when you had to meet a deadline at work in a relatively short period of time? What steps did you put in place to ensure that the deadline was met? **Planning, Organizing, Prioritizing**

Tell me about a time when you identified a problem and presented several solutions to your supervisor. **Problem Solving**

Tell of a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing their share of the work. How did you work through it? **Teamwork**

Describe a situation that required you to handle multiple tasks at one time. What did you do? **Time Management**



### Motivational Interview Questions

Describe the work environment or culture in which you are the most productive and happy

In your most recent employment what activities energized you the most?

In your most recent employment what activities energized you the least?

Imagine that you have received a coveted national award five years from now. Why did you receive the award, what is the award, and what are the circumstances under which you are receiving the award?

How do you ensure that your personal level of motivation is high on a daily basis?

How would you define success for your career? At the end of your work life, what must have been present for you to feel as if you had a successful career?

How have you coped in the past when an event or the actions of a person in your workplace adversely affected your personal motivation?

Describe the actions and behaviors of your manager or supervisor that you respond to most effectively

If you worked in a management role, how would you create a work environment that employees found motivating?

What's your biggest dream in life?

### Questions to ask the employer

What do you like about working for your company?

How would you describe your company culture?

What would a typical day be like in this position?

What do you feel is the most difficult characteristic of this job?

What types of training would be available to me?

What would I be expected to achieve in this position?

What are the characteristics of an ideal candidate for this job?

Is there any aspect of my background that makes you wonder if I am your ideal candidate?

If I get the job, how do I earn a "gold star" on my performance review?

What are the next steps in your interview process?

When do you expect to make a hiring decision?



Remember to:

Practice, practice, practice!

We want you to walk away from the interview knowing  
**You Nailed It!**

# Mock Interview Questions Rating Sheet

Job Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

5: Excellent 4: Above Average 3: Average/Adequate 2: Below Average 1: Needs Improvement

Interview Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1. Please tell me / us a little about yourself.					
2. What do you know about this company?					
3. What interests you about this job?					
4. What characteristics are most important to you in a good manager?					
5. What do you consider your greatest strength?					
6. What do you consider your greatest weakness?					
7. Why should we hire you over other candidates with more experience and/or education than you?					
8. What do you see yourself doing in five (ten) years?					
9. How do you handle stress or pressure?					
10. Give me an example of a problem you solved and the process you used.					
11. Describe a situation where you had to work with someone who was difficult.					
12. Tell me about a tough decision you made and how you reached it.					
13. If you could be an animal – which animal would you be and why?					
14. What motivates you?					
15. If I hired you for this position, tell me what you would see as your greatest training need?					
16. What are your team player qualities?					
17. Describe a situation you handled creatively.					
18. Tell me about a goal you set and reached during this past year. What obstacles confronted you along the way?					

Interview Questions	1	2	3	4	5
19. What can you contribute to the company?					
20. Do you have any questions for me?					
Interview Questions - Calculation & Score					
<b>Add Up Total Points For Each Column 1 to 5</b>					
<b>(A) Total Interview Question Rating Points</b>					
Demeanor Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1. The interviewee's dress is appropriate for the interview.					
2. The interviewee introduces him/herself and shakes hands.					
3. The interviewee's posture is erect, but relaxed.					
4. The interviewee makes eye contact when speaking.					
5. The interviewee thanks the interviewer(s) at the conclusion of the interview.					
Demeanor Questions - Calculation & Score					
<b>Add Up Total Points For Each Column 1 to 5</b>					
<b>(B) Total Overall Demeanor Rating Points</b>					
Overall Calculation & Score					
<b>Total Overall Interview Rating Points (add rows A &amp; B above)</b>					

Interview Score Legend	
Total Overall Mock Interview Score	Recommendation
<input type="checkbox"/> 100 to 125 Interview Points	<b>Excellent Interview Performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue preparation and practice</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> 75 to 99 Interview Points	<b>Above average interview performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review your approach to lower scored answers</li> <li>• Continue practice and preparation</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> 50 to 74 Interview Points	<b>Average/Adequate interview performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review your approach to lower scored answers</li> <li>• Take special note of critique and comments</li> <li>• Continue practice and preparation</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> 25 to 49 Interview Points	<b>Below average interview performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review your approach to lower scored answers</li> <li>• Take special note of critique and comments</li> <li>• Continue practice and preparation</li> <li>• Repeat the Mock Interview with a Placement Specialist following additional practice</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> 0 to 25 Interview Points	<b>Below average interview performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review your approach to lower scored answers</li> <li>• Take special note of critique and comments</li> <li>• Practice interviewing with a friend/family member</li> <li>• Access the Optimal Resume interview module</li> <li>• Continue practice and preparation</li> <li>• Repeat the Mock Interview with a Placement Specialist following additional practice</li> </ul>